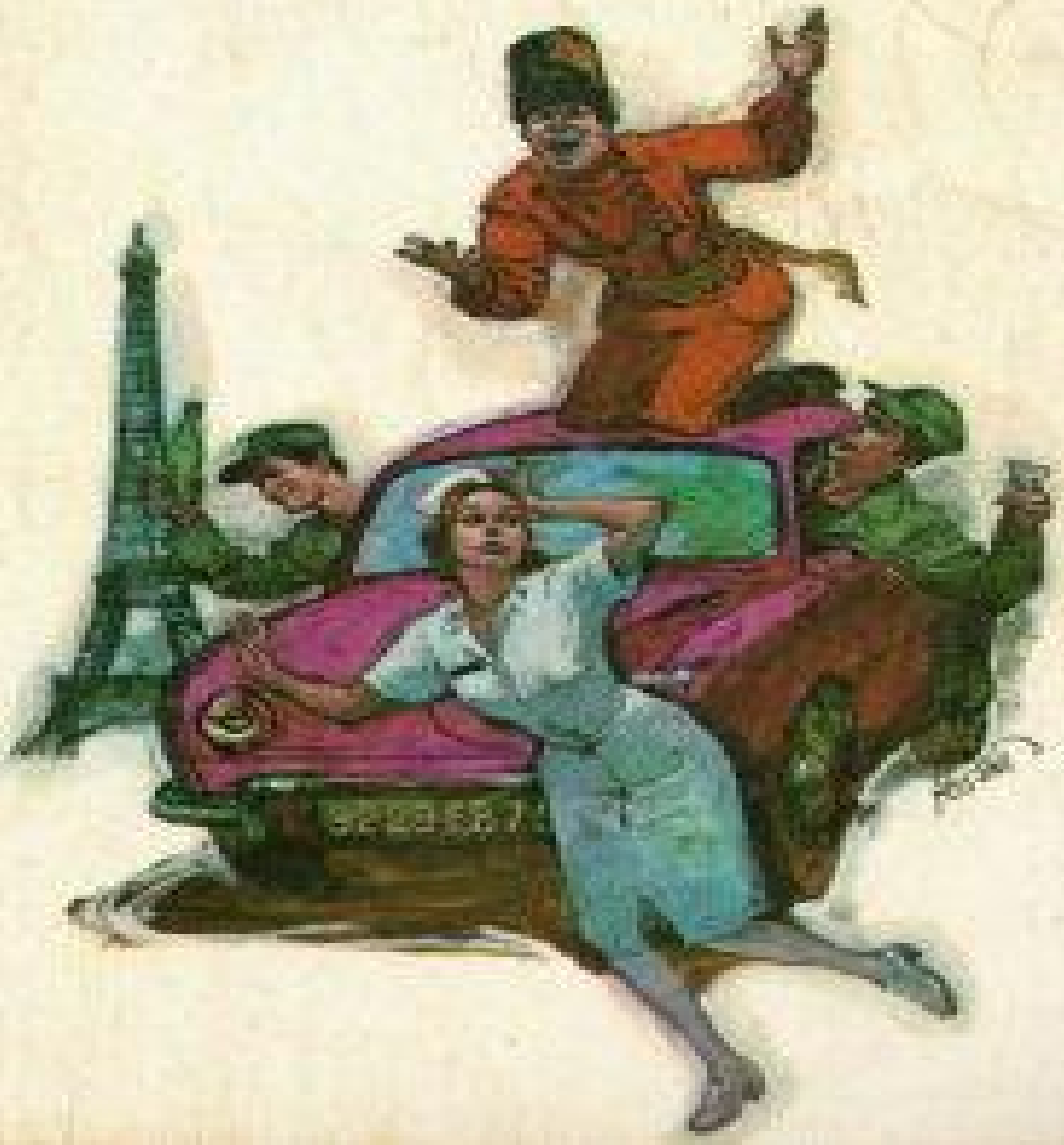
THE CBS-TV SMASH HIT

M*A*S*H GOES TO PARIS

Further misadventures of M·A·S·H

Richard Hooker and William E. Butterworth



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MASH GOES TO PARIS

When

HAWKEYE, king of the links and surgeon extraordinaire—

TRAPPER JOHN, bon vivant of the operating room and so good with his hands—

HOT LIPS, who's discovered … well … religion—

And RADAR, with his great new idea for a fast-food empire—

Hit that quaint sin city on the Seine, you can bet the results will be fast, furious, and farout. So here again, in an all-new madcap adventure, is that chaotic crew from MASH—ambassadors of goodwill and general mayhem.

Alors, allez oop!

MASH GOES TO PARIS

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M*A*S*H GOES TO PARIS

Further misadventures of M*A*S*H

Richard Hooker

And

William E. Butterworth

Pocket Book edition published January 1975

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MASH

MASH Goes to Maine

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MASH Goes to London, June, 1975

MASH Goes to Las Vegas, January, 1976

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MASH Mania, February, 1979

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Chapter One

On April 5, last, His Excellency the French Ambassador to the United States of America, already dressed for the occasion in formal morning clothes, laid down the remnants of his Big Mac hamburger, snapped off “As the World Turns” on his office television, and rose from behind what was probably the only legitimate Louis XIV desk in Washington, D.C., and set out on a matter of state.

The official ambassadorial black Citroen awaited him at the front door of the French Embassy. The Ambassador handed his silk top hat to the chauffeur (it was absolutely impossible to wear a silk top hat in the back of a Citroën) and crawled into the back seat. The gates to the embassy grounds were already open, and alert members of the Executive Security Service, seeing the Ambassador get in the car, stepped into the street and stopped traffic. The Citroën rolled majestically out of the embassy grounds. The wind caught the large tricolor mounted on the right front fender, whipped it across the hood, and blinded the driver. Rather than run the risk of running into the phalanx of Mercedes-Benz automobiles parked across the street in front of the German Embassy, the chauffeur slammed on the brakes and stopped the Citroën in the middle of the street.

The French Ambassador was absolutely convinced that the German Embassy didn’t need—couldn’t possibly use—all the Mercedes-Benz automobiles which were always parked in front of their embassy, and that they were there simply to rub Germanic affluence into French nostrils. He bristled at the knowledge that the German Ambassador could wear *his* top hat, with inches to spare, in the back seat of the German ambassadorial Mercedes.

He suspected, too, that behind the drapes of the German Embassy, there were now guttural guffaws at his predicament; the flag mounted on the right front fender of the ambassadorial Mercedes never blinded the German chauffeur.

The French Ambassador feigned a deep, professional interest in the contents of the attaché case on his lap, staring at a typewritten list until, finally, the damned flag was out of the way, and the journey could resume.

His Excellency suspected that it was going to be one of those days. For one thing, he had not been invited to lunch with the Secretary of State after his *chef de protocol* had telephoned for an appointment. It was not that the Ambassador was all that wild about chopped chicken liver and potato pancakes, washed down with Manischewitz Sparkling Concord (which was the usual fare these days in the State Department executive dining room), but this was one more subtle indication that relations between the Quai d'Orsay and Foggy Bottom were (again) at a low point.

There was even more incontrovertible proof of that. Word had reached him by coded cable that the American Ambassador to the French Republic had let it be known, over cocktails in the Bulgarians' Paris embassy, that he wished to discuss the French World War One indebtedness, with an eye toward repayment.

The Quai d'Orsay's response to that had been as immediate as it was predictable. Whenever the vulgar subject of debt repayment was brought up, the French immediately counterattacked with a diplomatic ploy that had never failed.

His Excellency the Ambassador was about to present His Excellency the Secretary of-State with a list of distinguished American citizens whom the French Republic was about to decorate for services rendered to La Belle France.

Under the odd system by which the Americans governed themselves, the Department of State responded to pressure from the Congress. And the Congress responded to the voice of the people, particularly those people who had been known in the past to make financial contributions at election time. Given those facts, all it took was a little basic research to come up with people who had influence on their representatives in the Congress and who, at some time, had a French connection.

The French connection could be any number of things. On the current list, for example, was a Louisiana industrialist, soon to be a *Chevalier de la Legion d'Honneur,* who had paid, out of his own pocket, for the complete refurbishing of a statue of the Sieur de Bienville, the French explorer who had founded New Orleans. Not only was this generous act worthy of official recognition by the French Government, but Max Schneider, the Deuxième Bureau's man in the French Quarter, had reported that the statue

refurbisher had both Louisiana's Senators and half of its congressional delegation on the payroll of his Chevaux Petroleum Company, as legal consultants.

Also on the list was a midwestern business executive, J. Robespierre O'Reilly, chairman of the board and chief executive officer of the ROR Corporation, an international fast-food service operation (Mother O'Reilly's Irish Stew Parlors) which was about to move into France, having successfully conducted a test market operation among French-speaking people in Fez and Marrakesh, Morocco. Not only did Mr. O'Reilly have close relations with the senior Senator from Kansas (who operated a large slaughterhouse operating in Kansas City when he was not busy in Washington) but he was in the midst of business negotiations with M. Henry d'Agneautet, a sheep breeder from near Bordeaux, from whom he planned to buy his lamb and mutton. M. d'Agneautet's brother, Jean Jacques, sat in the Chamber of Deputies, which meant they could kill two birds with one stone, or rather, rosette of the *Grande Compagnie the Gourmets Francais* into which Mr. O'Reilly was about to be invested as a Knight,

First Class.

There was also on the Ambassador's list a motley collection of food and wine importers, travel agents, singers of French opera, an aging but still attractive motion picture actress who had captured the fancy of an aging but still active French banker, and finally, another dual-purpose award, *L'Ordre de Jeanne d'Arc, Premiere Classe.* This was to be awarded to an American Florence Nightingale, a tender angel of mercy on the field of battle. During the Korean War, Edouard Vincente, Baron d'Hautville, then a *sous-lieutenant* doing his military service, and now taking his turn at the helm of d'Hautville Vineyards, which his family had owned for ten generations, had been wounded. He had been treated in an American hospital, and had never forgotten the nurse who had care for him so tenderly. It had taken some time to locate the nurse, because all the Baron had ever heard the nurse called was "Hot Lips," and there was no U.S. Army record of a nurse with that name.

Good old reliable Max Schneider, the Deuxieme Bureau's man in the French Quarter of New Orleans (where he operated, as a cover, Max

Schneider's Genuine Bavarian Wurst and Bier Hall) had solved that problem, as he had solved so many others. He had found the nurse known as Hot Lips right there in New Orleans. Her real name was Margaret Houlihan Wachauf Wilson. She was twice widowed. Her second husband had expired, as it were, on the nuptial couch on their wedding day, apparently of a heart seizure brought on by overexertion. She divided her time between serving as administrator of a school for nurses, and acting as Mother Emeritus of the God-Is-Love-In-All-Forms Christian Church, Inc., which had been founded by the late Reverend Wilson.

Schneider reported that Widow Wilson was very well connected, indeed, and that the proprietor of the New Orleans *Picaroon-Statesman* was one of her most ardent admirers. Beauregard Beaucoupmots, the *Picaroon-Statesman's* publisher, was, almost alone among major American newspapermen, a friend of France, editorially speaking. Making the Widow Wilson a member of the *Ordre de Jeanne d'Arc, Premiere Classe* was going to have multiple benefits. It would make the Baron happy. It would make Beauregard Beaucoupmots happy, and through his newspaper, it would become widely known.

In short, His Excellency the Ambassador (and indeed, the entire American Section at the Quai d'Orsay) was convinced that just as soon as the medals could be passed out to the list of deserving Americans, there would be no more vulgar talk about repayment of war debts.

Crude as they were known to be, no American was going to permit his politicians to talk about bad debts after having been presented with an ornate decoration in elaborate ceremonies on the Champs Elysees on a fine spring Paris afternoon.

What His Excellency the Ambassador did not know, as he rolled up to the ornate building housing the United States Department of State, was that the crisis between the United States and France had passed. A misunderstanding had been cleared up. It had been an understandable mistake. The French Ambassador to the People's Democratic Republic of the Congo (formerly the French Congo) had *not* insulted the wife of the American Ambassador to Zaire (formerly the Belgian Congo) at a diplomatic reception in Bujumbura, Ruanda-Urundi (formerly Belgian East Africa).

Specifically, the French Ambassador had meant the mountain, and not the American Ambassador's wife, when he announced that he "admired the Ambassador's Mount Rushmore," even though at the time, slightly in his cups, he had patted Madame Ambassador on her ample endowment.

The American Ambassador, whose diplomatic experience was somewhat limited (before his appointment, he had spent thirty years selling farm equipment, which enterprise had permitted him to make a substantial contribution to the political party of his choice, which had won the election), had left the reception in high dudgeon, gotten on the Hot Line, and called the President to report that not only had that Dirty Frog made a pass at his wife, but he had publicly announced the reason he liked her was because she had mountainous boobs. He wasn't used to talk like that in Sidney, Ohio, and he wasn't going to put up with it wherever-the-hell he was now.

The President wished to keep the Ambassador happy in Zaire, where certain snoops couldn't ask him about certain contributions, and he had reported the incident to the Secretary of State, who assured him he would prevent a recurrence. The matter was solved amicably by the French Ambassador, who presented the American Ambassador with a genuine Ubangi warrior's spear and shield, and Madame Ambassador with a quart bottle of perfume, *Essence d'Amour.*

And so, when the Citroen rolled up in front of the State Department, the Secretary of State awaited the French Ambassador right inside the foyer, a high-level courtesy normally paid only to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and certain Arabs with oil under their desert.

The Secretary of State, over coffee in the diplomatic reception room, assured the French Ambassador that the State Department would do everything within its power to grease the path of the honorees from the United States to Paris for the award presentation, and would see, additionally, that the affair received the fullest publicity in the press.

When they parted, both diplomats heaved sighs of relief. The French Ambassador rolled back in splendor to his embassy, getting there in time to watch his favorite television program "Who's the Bigger Fool?" He religiously watched the program, admitting privately that it was good for

his soul to see that he wasn't the only human being forced to grovel miserably and publicly in the pursuit of the dollar.

The Secretary of State went back to his office, had a cup of tea, and summoned F. Radcliffe Copperthwaite, the Undersecretary of State for Politico-Military Affairs.

"Freddy," he said. "I vant you hendle this yourself. All vhat you got to do is get these tventy people to Paris, and keep them sober long enough so we can take their pictures while some Frenchman pins a medal on them. You think you can hendle that by yourself?"

"Right, chief," Copperthwaite said. "I'll get back to you just as soon as I get the initial preliminary rundown on them from the FBI."

In two days he was back with the initial preliminary FBI rundown on the honorees. Cries of *"Oy vay iz mir!"* were heard to echo down the polished marble corridors from the Secretary's office, and then a rush call went out, convening an emergency meeting of the National Security Council.

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Chapter Two

There is annually in the federal budget, in that portion devoted to appropriations for the Department of Defense, one item that is never cut. Quite the reverse is true. Congressmen who bitterly protest the appropriation of even one dollar to enrich the military-industrial complex, and even those few still small voices crying in Congress for economy in all things, go out of their way—even make personal phone calls—to make sure that all that is needed, or might be needed, has been asked for.

"This is no place to skimp, nothing but the best will do," said Congresswoman Hortense V. Clumpp (Radical-Liberal, California) before yielding-the floor to Congressman Cadwallader C. Frizzell (Conservative-Confederate, Georgia).

"I rise to completely associate myself with my distinguished, if sometimes misguided, colleague from the great State of California," Congressman Frizzell said. "A cut in this appropriation would cast a dark cloud over all those things we hold dear. I would weep for this great deliberative body if it should fail in its clear duty to make the appropriation requested. Indeed, I am offering an amendment which will provide an additional five million dollars as a contingency fund, in case anything has been overlooked."

The appropriation, with the added $5,000,000 amendment, passed with what the *Congressional Record* referred to as (Applause). (Tumultuous.)

What brought Congresswoman Clumpp and Congressman Frizzell to stand shoulder to shoulder at the helm of the ship of congressional appropriation was the funds requested for the Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington.

The interest of Congress in the needs of the Walter Reed Army Medical Center obviously reflects Congress's well-known interest in the needs of the citizenry, without any political considerations whatever. Possibly, it has very little to do with the fact that Congressmen and their families are authorized access to all the facilities of Walter Reed Army Medical Center from obstetrical to postmortem for a daily rate of $2.35, all-inclusive, no tipping permitted.

The result of Congress's touching interest in what started out as an Army hospital is an enormous medical complex, ranking among the world's great hospitals medically, and very possibly heading the list of hospitals ranked according to what they cost per patient per day. (All expenses over the $2.35 per day, of course, are paid for by the taxpayer.)

The office of the commanding general of Walter Reed Army Medical Center is in keeping with the "Damn the Expense, Nothing Is Too Good for Our Brave Boys in the Service (or Serving in the Congress)" philosophy of our distinguished solons. It is large, airy, thickly carpeted, expensively furnished, and offers a fine view of wide, well-manicured lawns.

It is large enough, indeed, for a practice putting green between the heavy mahogany desk and the door to the outer office, and from time to time such a putting green has been installed, to provide the commanding general with a little something to take his mind off the press of his many duties.

None of this putting-green stuff for the incumbent commanding general, however. Taking little pokes at a small white ball with a weighted stick was not the sort of thing Major General Henry Blake, Medical Corps, U.S. Army, wanted to do with those precious few minutes he could spare from the many responsibilities and obligations pressing against *his* shoulders.

When the telephone rang, the red hot-line instrument, one of three telephones on the massive expanse of polished mahogany, General Blake was standing up on the seat of the high-backed leather-upholstered executive swivel chair (he felt it nicely simulated the rocking action of a flat-bottomed boat), making practice casts with a fly rod into an oak wastebasket (emblazoned with the caduceus of the Army Medical Corps) set against the far wall.

"Damn," he said, with a triple meaning. First, he had missed the cast, and that always annoyed him. Secondly, the phone was ringing, and ringing telephones always disturbed his concentration, and without concentration, decent casting was impossible. And finally, it was the red hot-line phone, which meant that it was probably something important.

He jumped nimbly to the floor, laid the fly rod carefully on the desk, and sat down in the chair as he put the telephone to his ear.

“General Blake,” he said.

“General, this is F. Radcliffe Copperthwaite,” his caller announced regally, if with a somewhat pronounced lisp, “I’m calling for the Secretary.”

“Which Secretary is that, Mr. Copperthwaite?” General Blake asked, reaching for a leather folio stamped TOP SECRET in gold letters. It contained the floor plan of the VIP wing of Walter Reed, where the distinguished leaders of the government were housed when receiving medical services. Placement of VIPs was an important matter, a delicate matter. It was not enough, as General Blake had quickly learned on assuming command of Walter Reed, to separate Democrats from Republicans. Consideration had to be given to other things. Southern Democrats hated northern Democrats as much as, well, midwest Republicans loathed eastern Republicans. As far as West Coast … particularly Californian … politicos were concerned, there was no telling. You just had to shove them in somewhere in the VIP wing and hope for the best.

“The Secretary of *State,”* Mr. Copperthwaite lisped, annoyed that he had to explain.

“What’s wrong with him?” General Blake said.

“Nothing is wrong with him,” Copperthwaite said flatly. “Nothing at all.”

“Then what does he want to come to Walter Reed for?” General Blake demanded. “Oh. I get it. I understand completely. Certainly, nothing is wrong with him. Rest assured, sir, we have a very discreet VIP entrance.”

“The Secretary of State,” Copperthwaite announced portentously, “has directed me to contact you and ascertain the earliest possible moment when you may consult with him on a matter of the deepest diplomatic import.”

“You mean he wants to talk to me?” Blake asked.

“Precisely,” Copperthwaite said.

“You wouldn’t want to give me any symptoms over the phone? So I would know what to bring in the ol’ black bag?”

“The Secretary does not require your personal medical services, General. This is a *diplomatic* matter.”

“Mr. Copperthwaite, I’m being just as diplomatic as I know how. There is a medical ethic, you know. The Secretary’s secrets are as safe with me as they would be with his wife.”

“The Secretary … oh, hell, I can see I’m just wasting my time with you,” Copperthwaite said, and the phone went dead.

Major General Henry Blake hung up the telephone, picked up the fly rod, and climbed back onto the seat of his executive swivel chair. He wound in the line, took careful aim, and cast toward the wastebasket by the door. He smiled with satisfaction as the fly settled gently into the basket.

“That’s more like it,” he said aloud. He looked at his wristwatch. Another hour and a half, and he could hang it up for the day.

He was halfway through winding the lure back on the spool when the red hot-line telephone went off again. He shrugged, climbed off the chair, and laid the rod down again.

“General Blake,” he said, settling back into his chair again.

“General Creighton here, Henry,” the voice on the telephone said. Major General Henry Blake stiffened and sat erect. “The balloon has gone up.”

“Yes, sir,” General Blake said.

“Undersecretary of State Copperthwaite was just on the hot line to me, Henry,” the General Creighton said. “He called here, too, sir,” Blake said.

“He told me,” General Creighton said. “And I think I should tell you, Henry, that he doesn’t think highly of your staff. He told me that he had been talking to some moron at Walter Reed and had gotten nowhere.”

“I’m sorry to hear that, sir,” Blake said.

“The thing is, Henry, that whatever they want over there has the personal backing of You-Know-Who.”

"*Him*, sir?"

"*Him*, himself," General Creighton said, with something approaching reverence in his voice.

"Yes, *sir,"* General Blake said, with enthusiasm.

"Undersecretary Copperthwaite couldn't discuss it on the telephone, of course. Never can tell who'd be listening in."

"Of course, sir."

"I told Undersecretary Copperthwaite that I would see to it, since You-Know-Who is personally concerned, that you personally would handle the matter."

"Yes, *sir,"* Blake said.

"Priority A-l-A," General Creighton said. "You understand, Henry?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good boy, Henry," General Creighton said. "I have every faith in you."

"Thank you, sir," General Blake said. "General Creighton, if you could tell me exactly what it is that I'm supposed to do…"

"How the hell should I know, Henry? Nobody tells me anything. I'm only the chief of staff. You just put your ass in high gear, Henry, and get over to the State Department. Double time, if you get my meaning."

"Yes, sir," General Henry Blake said. "Right away, sir."

"One thing more, Henry. Just between us. Out of school."

"Yes, sir?"

"Copperthwaite talks sort of … funny," General Creighton said. "Which sometimes gives people the idea that he's sort of … funny. You get my meaning?"

"Yes, sir."

"Watch yourself, Henry," General Creighton said. "Forewarned is forearmed, I always say."

“Thank you, sir,” Henry Blake said.

“Nice to talk to you, Henry,” General Creighton said, and the line went dead.

Major General Henry Blake put the red hot-line telephone back in its cradle, and then pushed a button on his intercom box.

“Yes, sir?” a somewhat metallic voice responded.

“Condition Red,” General Blake intoned solemnly. “As of immediately, if not sooner, I want the following departments on emergency standby.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Alcoholic recovery,” General Blake said. That seemed like the best bet. “And also Psychiatric; Genito-Urinary; the Cardiac Unit; and while you’re at it, you might as well include Venereal Disease.”

“Yes, sir.”

“And order up my car right away,” Blake concluded. “May I ask who the patient is, sir?”

“Sorry, that’s classified,” Henry Blake said. “You’ll be told no more than you have to know.” He released the intercom button, stood up and took his uniform tunic from a closet. He put it on and examined himself with approval in a full-length mirror mounted on the back of the closet door. Then he strode militarily out of his office, through the outer office and down the polished corridor to the staff car he had ordered to await him at the front door. His aide-de-camp, Major L. L. Llewellyn, Medical Service Corps, jumped to his feet as General Blake strode past his desk, and followed him down the corridor.

The staff car was waiting for General Blake. At one time, the official automobile provided for the commanding general of Walter Reed Army Medical Center had been either a Mercury or an Oldsmobile sedan. That was before the Army had decided to do its share in the energy crisis. The car that awaited General Blake, its master sergeant chauffeur holding the door open as he stood at attention, was a Pinto station wagon. It was painted olive drab, of course, and had otherwise been converted to military usage.

Bolted to the rear bumper was the whip antenna for the two-way radio which occupied most of the back seat. The roof and sides bore the red cross insignia of noncombatant military vehicles. The two-starred rank plate of a major general was affixed to the front and rear bumpers.

It looked, Major General Henry Blake thought, like an ambulance for dwarfs. But his not to reason why; a soldier never questions orders. One of the orders he did not question was the one which states that, when riding in closed military vehicles, the senior ranking passenger will ride in the right rear seat.

Major General Henry Blake crawled into the rear seat of the olive drab Pinto, rested his chin on his knees and tried to look military as Major L. L. Llewellyn got in the front seat beside the chauffeur.

Major Llewellyn picked up the microphone to the radio.

“Bedpan, Bedpan,” he called. “This is Bedpan Six.”

“Go ahead, Bedpan Six,” the operator replied through a speaker designed to be loud enough to carry over the sound of battle and which, in the rear seat of the Pinto, was three inches from General Blake’s ear. He stiffened and shuddered and clasped his hand protectively over his ear.

“Bedpan Six leaving area,” Major Llewellyn said. “Destination …” he paused. “Where are we going, sir?”

“The Department of State,” General Blake said.

“Destination Foggy Bottom,” Major Llewellyn concluded.

“Bedpan understands Bedpan Six to Foggy Bottom,” the radio boomed. With something less than a mighty roar, the Pinto pulled away from the main entrance to Walter Reed Army Medical Center. As they left the hospital grounds, the military police on guard, seeing the general officer’s license plates, snapped to attention and saluted. General Blake returned the salute by reflex action. Doing so, he cracked his elbow against the window of the Pinto and knocked his uniform cap off his head. Major General Henry Blake looked quite close to tears.

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Chapter Three

The Secretary of State welcomed General Blake cordially, coming from behind his enormous desk with a wide smile to take Blake's hand.

"Tank you for coming so quickly," he said. "Copperthwaite, ve vont be needing you for a vile, tank you very much, you can go now, find something to do."

Visibly unhappy, Undersecretary Copperthwaite left the room.

"I vouldn't vant you to get duh wrong idea habout him," the Secretary confided, taking Blake's arm and leading him to a couch before a coffee table. "He talks a liddle funny, but you shouldn't get the wrong idea. You can take it from me, he's all right. Vife, tree vunderful kiddies, the whole schmear. Act-shully, he's a vunderful fella."

"Yes, I'm sure he is, Mr. Secretary," General Blake said.

"Ve got a liddle problem, General," the Secretary said.

He bent over the coffee table and then handed the General a piece of dark bread thickly spread with a brownish substance. "A liddle chopped liver," the Secretary said. "Eat it in good health. Vat am I saying? I should be telling you that? *You're* the doctor already."

"Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary," General Blake said, taking the chopped liver on rye.

The Secretary spread more chopped liver on a piece of rye bread, popped it into his mouth, and leaned expansively back against the couch, chewing appreciatively.

"We have a liddle problem, General," the Secretary of State said.

"The U.S. Army and the Walter Reed Army Medical Center are completely at your disposal, Mr. Secretary," General Blake said, resisting the urge to stand at attention and salute.

"The Army, I don't need," the Secretary said. "The Walter Reed, I don't need," the Secretary paused. He rose to his feet, pointed his index finger at General Blake, and announced: "Uncle Sammy needs *you*, Cheneral!"

“Yes, *sir!”* General Blake said. This time he rose and saluted. The Secretary looked at him with his head cocked to one side. His left eyebrow rose a full inch.

“Sidt down,” the Secretary said. “Have some more chopped liver. I’ll lay it oudt for you.”

General Blake sat down on the edge of the couch at attention.

“You shouldn’t take offense, General,” the Secretary said. “But ve had the CIA do a liddle job on you.”

“On me, sir?”

“We now know more about you than anybody but your Mamma,” the Secretary said. “Well, maybe not your *Mamma,* but more, sure, than other people. Your vife, for example.”

General, Blake’s normally ruddy skin turned a sickly white.

“Yes, sir,” he said.

“Tell me, General, how’s your memory?” the Secretary asked, and then without waiting for a reply, went on. “You remember maybe, a couple names? Does the name Jean-Pierre de la Chevaux ring maybe a liddle bell?”

General Blake searched his memory. He could not, for the life of him, recall anyone by that name.

“No sir,” he said, finally. “I’m afraid not.”

“Dot’s surprising,” the Secretary said. “Vell, how ‘bout J. Robespierre O’Reilly?”

General Blake thoughtfully shook his head “no,” and finally said, “Sorry, sir. I don’t recognize the name.”

“If duh CIA got dis mixed up again,” the Secretary said. “You vouldn’t believe the stories I could tell you about those *schlemiels*, General.” As he spoke, he walked to his glistening desk, slid open a drawer, and took out a thick manila envelope, stamped TOP SECRET all over in large red letters. He took from it a thick sheath of paper.

“Blake, Henry J.,” he said. “Dot’s you, right?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Presently major general?”

“Yes, sir.”

“One-time commanding officer, as a lieutenant colonel, during the Korean War, of the 4077th MASH, right?”

“Yes, sir,” General Blake said.

“You should pardon my asking, vhat’s a MASH?”

“Mobile Army Surgical Hospital, sir.”

“So vhat’s that mean?”

“It’s the first hospital to which wounded soldiers requiring surgery are sent, Mr. Secretary. Actually, sort of a surgical first-aid station.”

“Sure, now I remember,” the Secretary said. “I was a soldier myself one time, you know.” There was just a slight note of masculine pride in his tone.

“No, I didn’t,” General Blake said heartily, delighted with the news. “But I can’t say that I’m surprised. May I suggest, Mr. Secretary, that we might be able to get to the bottom line of this problem if you were to regard it as a conversation between brother officers.”

“Act-shully, I was a sergeant,” the Secretary said. “The officers didn’t talk to me much.”

“Sergeants are the backbone of the Army,” General Blake said, somewhat weakly.

“I think we should change the subject,” the Secretary said. “How about this name? What’s ‘Hot Lips’ mean to you?”

General Blake grew even paler. “I seem to recall an Army nurse with that nickname,” he said. “I don’t know what it says in your report, Mr. Secretary, but I knew her only casually.”

“Dat’s in here, too,” the Secretary said. “She sorta liked a major named Burns, right?”

“Right,” General Blake enthusiastically agreed.

“How about ‘Hawkeye’?” the Secretary asked. “And ‘Trapper John’? You ever know people with names like that?”

“Yes, sir,” Blake said. “They were surgeons in the 4077th MASH.”

“Okay,” the Secretary said. “We got at least the right Blake. That’s something.”

“Yes, sir,” General Blake said.

“I’ll tell you something,” the Secretary said. “I don’t want it spread around, okay?”

“My lips are sealed, Mr. Secretary,” General Blake said.

“Right now, with the French, we don’t vant no problems.”

“Yes, sir,” General Blake said.

“And if the French vant to pass out some medals to some deserving Americans, the least the U.S. Government can do is produce the Americans sober, let the Frenchmen pin the medals on them, and give them a little smack on the cheeks, right?”

“Right, sir.”

“Couple of months ago, in New Orleans, somebody screwed up the statue of a Frenchman named Bienville,” the Secretary said.

“Is that so?” General Blake, who was somewhat confused, replied.

“You know who Bienville was?”

“I’m afraid not,” General Blake admitted.

“He discovered Louisiana, that’s who he is.”

“Is that so?” General Blake repeated.

“Let me tell you what they did to Bienville’s statue,” the Secretary said, with relish. “They painted his horse like a zebra. With stripes, you understand?”

“That’s terrible, Mr. Secretary,” General Blake said.

“Awful,” the Secretary agreed. “Then they got one of those waddyacallums, the dummy from a store window?”

“Mannequins,” General Blake offered.

“Right. They got one mannequin, put panties and a bra on it, and put it up on the statue behind the Frenchman.”

“Shocking!”

“I’m not finished,” the Secretary said. “The statue is hollow, you know? And the horse, the horse is a stallion, you have to understand, the horse is reared up on his back legs.”

“I see,” General Blake said.

“So they drilled a hole in the horse,” the Secretary said. “Right at the end of his Wang, you should excuse the expression.”

“Outrageous!” General Blake said, not quite able to suppress a beginning giggle.

The Secretary of State sat down beside Major General Blake and put his arm around his shoulder. His famous wide grin exposed all his famous neat white teeth. “Don’t laugh,” he said. “It gets vorse.”

General Blake’s eyes widened.

“So next they filled the statue with water, stuck a hose down this Bienville’s throat. It’s a big statue, holds a lot of water. So what do the good people of New Orleans see the next morning on the way to work? I’ll tell you what they see: on the base of the statue, somebody writes, with spray paint, ‘Saints 16, Cowboys 0.’ It’s a baseball game score, or something.”

“Football, I believe, Mr. Secretary,” General Blake said.

“Whatever. Anyway, a redheaded dummy in brassiere and pants is up there with Bienville, on biz zebra, and the zebra is pissing from one side of Rampart Street to the other.”

At this point, the commanding general of the Walter Reed Army Medical Center and the Secretary of State broke into hysterical laughter. Tears ran down their faces as their chests heaved. After a full minute it died down, only to get a fresh burst of energy as the Secretary described with his hands the arc the water forced out the hole in the statue made across Rampart Street.

Finally, staggering slightly, the Secretary rose from the couch and made his way to his office door. He pulled it open, and Undersecretary of State Copperthwaite, who had apparently been peering through the keyhole, stumbled into the room.

“Didn’t your Mamma ever tell you nice people don’t peek through keyholes?” the Secretary demanded. “You should excuse him, General. He used to be with the CIA.”

“I was tying my shoe,” Copperthwaite said somewhat lamely.

“Siddown and listen,” the Secretary said, “I vouldn’t vant you should strain your ears.” He turned to General Blake. “So everybody in New Orleans but the French Consul General has a liddle laugh,” he said. “The very same morning, Whatsisname, the Ambassador, comes over here in his silk top hat, shooting sparks out both ears. What am I going to do about this gross insult to the honor of France? So I tell him I’ll look into it, and I send Copperthwaite here to New Orleans. You tell him what happened next, Copperthwaite.”

“I set up an appointment with the Mayor of New Orleans, and the Air Force flew me down there,” Copperthwaite said. “The Mayor explained that it was just a simple prank, and that the damage had already been repaired. The Chief of Police told me that he had already approached a Mr. de la Chevaux, a very prominent local citizen of French ancestry, and Mr. de la Chevaux had paid for the paint to be removed from the base of the statue, and the stripes from the zebra, and for the … uh … structural damage … to the horse to be welded shut. I personally examined the statue, and then returned to Washington to report to the Secretary.”

“That was certainly a fine gesture on the part of Mr. de la Chevaux,” General Blake said.

“The French Ambassador thought so, too,” Copperthwaite went on. “We were not really at all surprised when we learned that the French Government planned to decorate Mr. de la Chevaux.”

“The General says he never heard of Chevaux,” the Secretary said.

“He hasn’t?” Copperthwaite said, obviously surprised. “How strange. Well, as a routine matter, when the list of awardees was presented to the

Secretary, we had the FBI do an initial, preliminary rundown on them."

"Oy vay," the Secretary muttered.

"And we learned the Mayor and the Chief of Police had not told us the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," Copperthwaite said. "He did not, for example, go into the details of his approaching Mr. de la Chevaux about repairing the statue."

"Tell him, Copperthwaite," the Secretary said. "Stop with the diplomatic big words."

"The FBI learned that when the Chief of Police went to Mr. de la Chevaux, it was in the New Orleans city jail. To cut a long and dreadful story short, after Mr. de la Chevaux and his associates had done the job on the Bienville statue, they went on to other things. The list is extensive, but the specific charge on which they were arrested was assault by swamp buggy."

"Swamp buggy? You mean those things with the big wheels they use in the swamps?"

"Precisely," Copperthwaite said. "As chairman of the board of the Chevaux Petroleum Corporation, Mr. de la Chevaux has, unfortunately, access to its equipment, which includes a fleet of swamp buggies. This isn't the first time he's been involved in trouble with the law because of them, but this was an especially unfortunate incident."

"How so?"

"Of all the streets in New Orleans on which they could have held their brawl, they chose Avenue de General Charles de Gaulle."

"Oh, I see," Blake said.

"And the ultimate confrontation between Mr. de la Chevaux and his associates and the police took place at the intersection of Avenue de General Charles de Gaulle and Algiers Avenue," Copperthwaite said. "Where there is … or was … a statue of Joan of Arc."

"Luckily," the Secretary said, "she vasn't riding a horse. She was just standing there, waving a sword."

“In the melee which ensued,” Copperthwaite went on, “one of the swamp buggies ran into that statue, which was jarred loose from its pedestal, fell, and landed on its face …”

“The sword broke,” the Secretary of State offered helpfully.

“… in the mud,” Copperthwaite continued.

“Show him the picture, Copperthwaite,” the Secretary ordered. Copperthwaite went to the TOP SECRET and took from it a clipping from the front page of the New Orleans *Picaroon-Statesman.* He gave it to General Blake. It was a four-column photograph of a man wearing what appeared to be the remnants of a Civil War era naval uniform, with tricornered hat. He was standing, one foot resting atop the toppled statue of Joan of Arc, in the manner of a successful elephant hunter with his trophy. His left hand clutched a half-gallon bottle of Old White Stagg Kentucky Bourbon Whiskey and his right the sword Joan had originally wielded, and with which he was holding at bay three very large New Orleans policemen, who were clearly visible in the background. The headline of the story ran:

Saints 16; Cowboys 0

Horsey 1; Joan of Arc 0

Beneath the photograph was the story:

By Ace Travers, Picaroon-Statesman *Reporter.*

Pictured shortly before he was driven off to Police headquarters, Jean-Plerre “Horsey” de la Chevaux, president and chairman of the board of the Chevaux Petroleum Corporation, greets three of New Orleans finest as they seek to investigate the accident which toppled the statue of Joan of Arc on General de Gaulle Avenue.

It is not yet clear at this time whether Mr. de la Chevaux, well-known Louisiana sportsman and philanthropist, was driving the Chevaux Petroleum swamp buggy which collided with the statue and two passing police cars at the busy intersection, or simply a passenger.

It is known that Mr. de la Chevaux, together with fellow members of the Bayou Perdu Council, Knights of Columbus, had witnessed the football game which saw the Dallas Cowboys go down to a 16-0 defeat

at the hands of the New Orleans Saints. Police officials stated they were investigating reports that Mr. de la Chevaux, who is well known as a devoted Saints supporter, was in some manner involved in the alterations performed on the Sieur de Bienville statue on Rampart Street earlier this morning. The alterations, performed without the permission of the New Orleans Historic and Civic Betterment Society, have been the source of some controversy. They have been variously described as "long-needed improvements" and a "horrible, shameful desecration."

Mr. de la Chevaux, who was reported to be in conference with New Orleans Chief of Police Harold G. Kegelbender, was not available for comment, but a spokesman for the Chevaux Petroleum Corporation announced that the Chevaux Petroleum Cultural Foundation was making a financial grant which would insure that both statues "would be restored and refurbished to a condition in which all New Orleanians may take pride." The same spokesman dismissed as "vicious slander" the allegation that Mr. de la Chevaux had purposefully driven his swamp buggy into the statue after having been told that it had been erected by the New Orleans Women's Liberation Association.

"I don't suppose," General Blake said, clearing his throat, "that under the circumstances, the French Government still wishes to decorate Mr. de la Chevaux?"

"The French Government, fortunately, doesn't know about it," Copperthwaite said. "The problem we face is preventing another incident of this nature while Mr. de la Chevaux is in Paris."

"I don't quite understand how this involves me," General Blake said.

"I called Chief of Police Kegelbender," the Secretary I said. "And had a long talk with him. He said he's known Horsey Chevaux all his life, long before they found natural gas under his swamp. In all that time, he's known only three people who could made Horsey behave."

"I see," Henry Blake said. He reminded himself that diplomats, by definition, never said what they meant, and that he really couldn't be expected to understand what the point was.

“One of them is a Roman Catholic Archbishop,” the Secretary said, “but he’s out of the country. The other two people are two people you said you know, General.”

“Who’s that?”

“Dr. Benjamin Franklin Pierce and Dr. James Francis Xavier McIntyre,” the Secretary said. “Also known as Hawkeye and Trapper John.”

“If I may make a suggestion, Mr. Secretary?” General Blake asked gingerly.

“Shoot,” the Secretary said. “We’re always open to suggestion here at the State Department.”

“I didn’t know that,” Copperthwaite said.

“What I was going to suggest, Mr. Secretary,” General Blake said, “is that you make a real effort to enlist the Archbishop in your project.”

“No one knows where the Archbishop is but the Vatican,” the Secretary said, “and the Vatican’s not talking. And when the Vatican’s not talking, that’s it. There’s no leaks, no ‘usually reliable sources’ with loose lips in *their* Foreign Office, let me tell you that.”

“Speaking of leaks, Mr. Secretary…” Copperthwaite said.

“Now what?” the Secretary said, throwing up his hands.

“Congresswoman Hortense V. Clumpp has found out that we’ve scheduled Air Force One for a Paris trip,” Copperthwaite said.

“How did she find that out?”

“Security suspects one of the stewardesses, Mr. Secretary. She’s a known women’s libber sympathizer.”

“Well, call the Secretary of the Air Force and have him get rid of her.”

“That may be a little awkward, Mr. Secretary,” Copperthwaite said. “It’s the stewardess who gives him the back rubs; the one he calls `Snookums.’ “

“You mean the redhead, with the big …”

“That’s the one,” Copperthwaite said.

“I’ve got enough to worry about with this crazy Cajun without having that *verruckte* Congresswoman running loose in Paris,” the Secretary said. “She’ll go on this trip over my dead body.”

“That’s what you said when you went to China,” Copperthwaite said. “When we had that trouble with Mao about her stealing souvenir bricks from the Great Wall.” The Secretary glowered at him.

“Getting back to Dr. Pierce and Dr. McIntyre,” he said. “Since you knew them so well in the service, General, maybe you’ll have some idea how they would respond to another opportunity to go abroad again, briefly, in the service of their country. Particularly if there was a little medal in it for them.”

General Blake made strangling noises for a moment, and then started to laugh uncontrollably.

“Something is funny?” the Secretary demanded coldly.

There was no immediate reply. General Blake had managed to get a handkerchief out of his pocket and began to wipe his eyes, but he was in no condition to speak.

“I’d like to know what’s so funny,” the Secretary said almost plaintively. “All we want to do is send two doctors on a free trip to Paris, and we throw in a little French medal in the bargain, and all they got to do for us is make some crazy Cajun behave for a couple of days.”

“Mr. Secretary,” General Blake said, having regained at least partial control of himself. “I think I’d better tell you something about Drs. Pierce and McIntyre.”

“Maybe you better,” the Secretary said. General Blake spoke without interruption for ten minutes, and once again, the anguished cry, *“Oy vay iz mir!”* was heard echoing down the polished marble corridors of the State Department building.

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Chapter Four

Three days, one hour and twenty-five minutes later, a full colonel of the United States Air Force, in the pilot's seat of a Douglas 707 Intercontinental jet, reached for his microphone.

"Spruce Harbor International," he said. "This is Air Force One."

There was no reply at all. "Spruce Harbor International, this is Air Force One," he repeated, and again there was no reply. The colonel threw a switch. "Aircraft Commander to Communications Officer. I'm experiencing transmitter difficulty. Please activate Standby System One."

There was a brief pause.

"Communication Officer to Aircraft Commander. Standby System One in operation."

"Spruce Harbor International, this is Air Force One," the colonel said for a third time. This time there was a reply.

"Smart-ass calling Spruce Harbor is going to get his you-know-what in a crack if he keeps that up," a dry, Down-East voice said, with slight Italianate vocal overtones. At the Spruce Harbor microphone was Wrong-Way Napolitano, sometimes known as the Lindbergh of Maine.

"Air Force One to Spruce Harbor International," the radio blared. "Air Force One estimates arrival your station in five minutes. Request landing and taxi instructions."

"Spruce Harbor to Smart-ass," Wrong Way said into his microphone. "Landing instructions follow: Slow down. Lower wheels. Aim for the ground. Spruce Harbor out."

Four minutes and fifty seconds later, Wrong-Way Napolitano raised his eyes from the centerfold of *Flying Fun* magazine. Not only was there the familiar sound of a large jet making an approach, but the night was suddenly and brilliantly lit by the landing lights in the leading edge of a wing.

Wrong-Way stood up, his eyes even wider than the centerfold of *Flying Fun* had made them. He watched in disbelief as a glistening 707, with UNITED STATES OF AMERICA painted in large letters along the

fuselage, came roaring out of the sky, touched down, and rolled, ever slowing, toward the end of the runway.

Wrong-Way grabbed the telephone. He dialed quickly, from memory, the home telephone number of the Honorable Bascomb K. Bartlett, Mayor of Spruce Harbor. The phone was answered on the third ring. “Myrtle, this is Wrong-Way,” he said quickly. “Lemme talk to Moosenose.” There was a slight pause. “I don’t care where he is. This is an emergency. Hand him the phone. It’s probably better that he’s sitting down anyway.”

There was another pause, during which Wrong-Way could faintly but distinctly hear Mayor Moosenose Bartlett’s voice: “Christ, is there *no* place around here I can find a little uninterrupted peace and quiet?”

But finally the Honorable Mr. Bartlett came on the telephone.

“This better be important, Wrong-Way,” he said, menacingly.

“Air Force One just landed out here,” Wrong-Way said.

There was silence, and then Wrong-Way heard Myrtle Bartlett faintly demand what was going on.

“Wrong-Way says that Air Force One has just landed out at the airfield,” His Honor the Mayor said.

“Oh, that poor woman,” Mrs. Bartlett said. “The moment she takes her eyes off him, Wrong-Way finds a bottle someplace.”

“Wrong-Way,” His Honor the Mayor said gently. “Take another look at the window. See if Air Force One is still there. If so, what else can you see?”

“I’m looking out the window now,” Wrong-Way reported. “It’s taxiing up to here from the end of the runway.” He had an inspiration. “Listen!” he said. He then pointed the telephone microphone toward the unmistakable whistling sound of the engines.

Wrong-Way put the telephone back to his ear. “I’m on my way, Wrong-Way!” the Mayor said. He broke the connection and dialed the police department. “This is Mayor Bartlett,” he said.

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“How they hanging, Moosenose?” the radio operator replied.

“Is the Chief there?”

“Ernie, Moosenose wants to talk with you,” the operator said, and then the Chief of Police came on the line.

“I hope this is important, Moosenose,” he said. “You know I don’t like to have the pinochle game busted up over nothing.”

“Ernie, a large airplane just landed at the airport. Wrong-Way thinks it’s Air Force One. I think Wrong-Way’s been at the Chianti again. But there is a plane out there, making an unscheduled landing. I think we’d better play it safe by getting a doctor out there. Go get Hawkeye or Trapper John, and get out there.”

“On my way,” the Chief said. He broke the connection with his finger and dialed the number of the Spruce Harbor Medical Center. “This is Chief Kelly,” he said. “Who is on call tonight?”

“Dr. Jones is on call, Ernie,” the operator said. “But if it’s an emergency, Hawkeye’s in the hospital. He’s taking a gallbladder out of Old Miss Fenwick in the morning, and he’s in her room with her, calming her down.”

“Tell Hawkeye to get his emergency kit,” the Chief said. “Air Force One has just landed at the airport, and he is needed out there. Tell him I’m on my way now to pick him up.”

Hawkeye was known somewhat more formally to the Maine State Board of Medical Licensing, and to the American Surgical College, as Benjamin Franklin Pierce, M.D. He had once been known to the U.S. Army as PIERCE, B.F. 0-2379656 CAPT Medical Corps, and he had once been known to Miss Lucretia Fenwick, his sixth-grade teacher, as “Benjamin,” although practically everybody else in the world called him “Hawkeye.”

Miss Fenwick, whose gallbladder he was about to remove, was, his mother excepted, Hawkeye’s oldest friend of the opposite gender. She had had faith in him in the sixth grade, when just about everybody else in town had been convinced he was a vicious little monster already well down the

well-worn path to what, in those days, was held up as the major deterrent to crime, the Electric Chair.

It had to do with a mother bird and her baby birds. Hawkeye and his crony of those days, even then known as Moosenose Bartlett, were sitting on Moosenose's porch dreaming dreams of Buck Rogers in the Twenty-First Century. They were at an age when space flight, rather than Buck's lady friend, Wilma, and her somewhat revealing costumes, was their predominant interest.

Hawkeye, it was generally acknowledged, was somewhat more imaginative than Moosenose, who even then had begun to show signs of the complete lack of innovative and thus potentially disruptive ideas which was to practically guarantee him election to one political office after another in later life. He even then possessed, in other words, the ability to listen to other people's ideas with obvious interest and high regard without ever once raising objections to them.

Hawkeye Pierce had come to be called "Hawkeye," rather than "Little Benjy" (or perhaps "Junior") after his father, Big Benjy Pierce, because of that gentleman's firm belief that English belle lettres had reached its apex in James Fenimore Cooper and had gone into sudden descent following the publication of *The Last of the Mohicans,* whose specific name, you will recall, was Hawkeye. Addressing his offspring as Hawkeye, regardless of what it said on the birth certificate, was Big Benjy Pierce's idea of a compliment, both to his son and to James Fenimore Cooper.

While Moosenose Bartlett may not have quite understood this, neither did he take the opposite tack and demand as others had, "Where'd you ever get a dumb name like that?" He was, to reiterate, a born politician.

He sat listening, that warm spring day when they were both in Miss Lucretia Fenwick's sixth grade, as Hawkeye allowed his imagination to run wild with all the delightful things he and Moosenose could do if possessed of Buck Roger's backpack rocket engines. The possible joys began with soaring along over Maine's rock-bound beaches, and went onward and upward from there.

At that point, the baby bird fell out of its nest.

The nest was in a tree directly across the sidewalk from where Hawkeye and Moosenose sat on Moosenose's porch.

"I suppose we had better get that dumb little bird back in its nest," Hawkeye said.

"I'm not supposed to climb trees," Moosenose replied. "My mother says I ruin my school pants that way."

"This is an emergency," Hawkeye said. "It's not the same thing as climbing trees for fun."

A compromise was reached. Moosenose got his father's ladder from its resting place over the rafters in the garage and agreed to steady the ladder while Hawkeye climbed it and returned the baby bird to its nest.

The movement of the ladder from the garage, up the driveway, and to the tree was witnessed by the Lady-Next-Door, Mrs. Sidney Watters. Mr. and Mrs. Watters had not been blessed with issue and perhaps as a consequence she was somewhat suspicious of sixth-grade boys, and these two in particular.

Only two weeks before, she had heard a yelp of feline pain and rushed to the window to see Mr. Whiskers, the Watters family cat, dash madly for the roof. Hawkeye Pierce had also been visible, a slingshot in his hand, a look of triumph on his face.

"What have you done to Mr. Whiskers, you horrid little boy?" Mrs. Watters demanded in a somewhat piercing voice.

"That cat was trying to catch a robin," Hawkeye said. "He shouldn't do that."

"That's not true!" Mrs. Watters had said, coming immediately to the defense of her faithful feline friend. "Mr. Whiskers does not eat little birdies. Mr. Whiskers eats his own food out of his own bowl."

The battle had ended in sort of draw. Big Benjy Pierce had been notified of his son's crime. He placated Mrs. Walters as best he could, but after hearing Hawkeye's' version of the incident chose not to punish his son.

Today, however, Mrs. Walter's sympathies lay entirely with the birds. She had eyes in her head, and she knew what she saw: that horrid Pierce boy, putting a ladder up in a tree to snatch a baby bird from its nest.

Hawkeye was somewhat confused, too. As he climbed the ladder, the mother bird had suddenly appeared and misunderstood, apparently, his good intentions. She dive-bombed him, setting up at the same time an angry call. He almost fell off the ladder, and climbing the rest of the way up to the nest was obviously going to be impossible. He needed one hand to hold the baby bird, and one hand for the ladder; there was no third hand available to defend himself from the angry mother bird. There were no options. He retreated down the ladder. As he neared the bottom, a second baby bird, chirping piteously, came fluttering down from the nest.

"What do we do now, Hawkeye?" Moosenose Bartlett asked.

"I don't know," Hakweye replied. "But we just can't leave them there on the ground. If the Lady-Next-Door's cat don't eat them, they'd catch their death of cold."

"That's right," Moosenose agreed. Hawkeye bent over and picked up the second baby bird, which was fluttering around the ground. He now had a baby bird in each hand as Mrs. Watters, peering from behind the heavy green drapes in her dining room, could plainly see. She was a God-fearing Christian woman, who knew her duty when she saw it. Since the little monster's father was no better than the son—as the twig is bent, so grows the tree—getting in touch with him would be futile.

What had to be done, had to be done. She picked up the telephone.

"Hortense," she said to the operator. "Give me the police station!"

Hawkeye, meanwhile, had come across a path of action, if not a solution to the problem.

"The first thing we got to do is keep them warm," he announced.

"Right," Moosenose agreed. "Then what?"

"Then we'll look in the 'cyclopedia to see how you're supposed to take care of motherless baby birds," Hawkeye said. He had accepted at face value Miss Lucretia Fenwick's announcement that all the world's important

information could be found in the encyclopedia. Certainly, something as important as caring for motherless baby birds would be covered in great detail.

“Right,” Moosenose agreed again. “How you gonna keep the birds warm, Hawkeye?”

“We’ll put them in the oven,” Hawkeye said. “Set the thing where it says ‘warm.’ “

“I’m not allowed to mess with the stove,” Moosenose said. “My mother says I’ll burn the house down.”

“I told you before,” Hawkeye said, “this is an *emergency.”*

They marched into Moosenose’s mother’s kitchen, found a baking pan, put the birds in it, and then, to keep them from falling out, put a colander over them. Hawkeye was pleased. The birds would be warm and safe.

Leaving the oven door open a crack, he and Moosenose moved next to the Bartlett living room, where a full set of *Compton’s Pictured Encyclopedia* had rested, just about virginally, on top of the upright piano, since the passage through town of a smooth-talking educational counselor four years before.

Volume 2, ACE-CRE, was taken down from the piano and placed on the floor. Hawkeye and Moosenose bent over it.

Thursday afternoons at four o’clock being something of slack period, crimewise, down at the police station, it had been possible to immediately dispatch a police car to investigate the telephone complaint that two juvenile delinquents were molesting baby birds over on Maple Avenue.

In times of stress, Mrs. Watters was prone to pick up: Mr. Whiskers, to hold him in her arms and stroke his silky fur, a practice that frequently made both of them purr. She did so immediately after being assured that a police car was on the way.

When the police car appeared, she left the house, carrying Mr. Whiskers with her, and discussed the matter with the police, not forgetting to inform them she had already learned of the Pierce boy’s perverse pleasure in torturing innocent animals.

“I pride myself on my minding my own business,” she announced. “But if someone doesn’t protect the little creatures, who will?”

Moosenose answered the doorbell. Hawkeye was having very little success finding a section on the “Care and Treatment of Baby Birds” in *Compton’s Pictured Encyclopedia.*

“Have you got a couple of birds in here, son?” the policeman asked. Moosenose didn’t look like an eleven-year-old pervert to him.

“Yes, sir,” Moosenose said. Then he demonstrated a character facet that was to stand him in good stead in his; political career; the ability to know when to change sides. “Hawkeye made me do it!” he blurted. “I told him we’d get in trouble!”

“You see! You see!” Mrs. Watters cried. “I told you so!”

“Just where are the birds, son?” the policeman asked.

“Hawkeye put them in the oven,” Moosenose announced.

“My God!” Mrs. Watters said, in horrified tones.

Moosenose led the way into the kitchen, followed by Mrs. Watters carrying Mr. Whiskers, and the minions of the law. Hawkeye, attracted by the noise, arrived in the kitchen just as one policeman had removed the baking pan from the oven, and removed the colandar holding them safely in place. Mr. Whiskers, recognizing opportunity when he saw it, jumped nimbly from Mrs. Watters’ arms onto the table, grabbed one of the baby birds in its mouth, and lit out for parts unknown.

Perhaps if Haweye had not acquired, mainly through his father, a certain flair for piquant language, the matter might have been amicably settled on the spot. But unfortunately, in times of stress, Hawkeye was prone to use some of the piquant language he had acquired from his father.

“You stupid sonofabitch,” he screamed tearfully, “I didn’t climb that goddamned tree to save that bird just so’s some dumb Mick flatfoot could feed it to that old bitch’s goddamned cat!”

He added injury to insult by assaulting the aforesaid officer of the law by kicking him in the shins. It was an unfair contest. Not only was the police officer about twice as large in all dimensions as Hawkeye, but he had

an ally in the other police officer. Moosenose Bartlett, sensing the public's mood, moreover, had decided that his patriotic duty lay in associating himself with the forces of law and order.

"Shame on you!" he cried. "Talking dirty like that in front of Mrs. Watters."

Hawkeye got in one good lick at Moosenose's nose, causing same to leak redly, before he was subdued and carried bodily out of Moosenose's house and deposited in the back seat of the police car.

News of this sort in a small town, particularly a small town with a no-dial telephone system presided over by a female who loved to pass the word, circulates quickly. The news, embellished several times in being relayed, reached the ears of Miss Lucretia Fenwick within the hour, with the additional tidbit that the boy's parents were off somewhere, and until they could be located, the little monster was being held at City Hall in the Mayor's office.

Miss Fenwick, blood in her eye, arrived at City Hall five minutes later, and, grabbing Hawkeye's hand, snatched him from the interrogation being conducted by the Reverend Donald D. Dudley, His Honor the Mayor, and the Chief of Police. Reverend Dudley had been summoned by the Mayor, who had had little previous experience with eleven-year-old animal-torturers.

"See here, Miss Fenwick," His Honor the Mayor said, "you can't just walk in here and take him away like that!"

"You don't propose to stop me, do you?" she said, never breaking stride. "It wouldn't be the first time I boxed your ears, Horace!"

Miss Lucretia Fenwick took Hawkeye Pierce to her home, fed him milk and graham crackers, ordered him to wash his face, and told him to tell her what had happened. He finished doing so just about the time that Big Benjy Pierce arrived at Miss Fenwick's home, visibly disturbed.

"What the hell's … excuse me, Miss Fenwick … what's going on around here?" he demanded.

Miss Fenwick, her arm around Hawkeye's shoulder, said, "Benjy, Hawkeye has made a little mistake, and he just promised me it will never

happen again."

"What sort of a mistake, Miss Fenwick?" Big Benjy Pierce asked, obviously expecting the worst.

"He called a dumb Mick flatfoot a dumb Mick flatfoot to his face," Miss Fenwick said. "I explained to him that no matter what the provocation, a gentleman does not make fun of people for things over which they have no control."

"That's all?"

"There was a misunderstanding with Mrs. Watters," Miss Fenwick said. "I daresay the poor soul's been tippling again. I don't think she's drawn a completely sober breath in five years."

From that day forward, understandably, Miss Lucretia Fenwick ranked very high in the estimation of Benjamin Franklin "Hawkeye" Pierce. And equally understandably, Hawkeye was never able, thereafter, to place his full trust and confidence in Moosenose Bartlett.

His reaction, when the nurse came into Miss Fenwick's room in the Spruce Harbor Medical Center, where he and Miss Fenwick were playing a little five-card stud, two-bit limit, with the announcement that he had been summoned to the airport by Mayor Moosenose Bartlett, was predictable.

"Tell Mayor Moosenose to drop dead," he said with a little smile. "Your bet, Miss Fenwick."

"Doctor," the nurse said, "the Chief of Police said the Mayor said Air Force One has just landed out there."

"Both of them drunk at the same time, huh?" Hawkeye replied. "Tell them both not to bother me when I'm playing poker with my friends."

"Hawkeye," Miss Lucretia Fenwick said, gathering up the cards expertly, "you go out there."

"I'd rather stay with you," he said.

"I know, dear," she said. "But what if it is Air Force One, and you're really needed?"

“You don’t really believe that Air Force One is actually at our airport, do you?”

“Of course not,” she said. “But I do want you to come back and tell me what it was that made Moosenose and Ernie think it was Air Force One.”

“I’m on my way,” Hawkeye said. He leaned over and kissed Miss Lucretia Fenwick on the cheek. “Behave yourself while I’m gone,” he said.

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Chapter Five

It had been necessary to convene another meeting of the National Security Council after Major General Henry Blake had reported to the Secretary of State certain facts concerning Drs. Pierce and McIntyre which had not, somehow, become a matter of official record.

The head of the FBI stood by his report. Both doctors, he said, were highly respected members of their communities. Dr. Pierce was chief of surgery at the Spruce Harbor Medical Center, and both of them were fellows of the American Surgical College. They had not exceeded the legal limit of one wife per man; they belonged to no suspicious organizations except the AMA; and a thorough search of all available law enforcement records turned up no outstanding warrants for their arrest.

General Blake tried very hard, but with little success, to make the point that sending Hawkeye Pierce and Trapper John McIntyre to Paris to insure the good behavior of someone else was like sending a sex-starved sailor to a house of ill-repute to give a lecture on the merits of chastity.

He did manage to convince the assembled dignitaries, however, that getting the two of them to cooperate would take more than a personal telephone call from the Secretary of State, or even from the President. As tactfully as he could, he suggested that, as a practical matter, a telephone call from the President might not be at all advisable.

A plan of operation did come out of the meeting. Air Force One would make a wide sweep around the nation, picking up those-to-be-decorated. This would not only provide local publicity for those-to-be-decorated, but would also help to counter the widely held belief that the only thing Air Force One was used for, aside from the Secretary of State’s jaunts around the world, was to ferry the President and his cronies between the country’s more interesting golf clubs.

The first stop in the United States would be the Spruce Harbor International Airport, in Maine, where, in one way or another, Drs. Pierce and McIntyre would be loaded aboard the aircraft. As more and more of Mr. de la Chevaux’s activities and interests came to light, it became more and more apparent that escorting him would be a full-time job for the doctors,

and they were not to be afforded the opportunity of bringing their wives with them.

“That is liable to pose some problems,” Undersecretary Copperthwaite offered. “My wife always has a fit when I go off to Paris by myself.”

“I can’t imagine why,” the President said. “Anyway, you can handle it. You’re supposed to be a diplomat.”

The last stop in the United States, from which Air Force One would fly directly to Paris, would be New Orleans, where both Mr. de la Chevaux and Margaret Houlihan Wachauf Wilson would board. That would reduce what the Secretary of the Air Force called the “in-flight high-risk factor” to the minimum.

Dr. Pierce was the first to arrive at the Spruce Harbor Airport when Air Force One landed. He arrived in a police car, its siren screaming, its blue lights flashing. Undersecretary Copperthwaite had no way of knowing, of course, that Dr. Pierce had spent the afternoon on the golf course, and stopped by the Spruce Harbor Medical Center to visit a patient before going home, and had been summoned from the hospital to the airport. All he knew was what he saw, and what he saw was a tall, rather thin character wearing plaid knickers, a lavender turtleneck sweater, and a chartreuse tam o’shanter with tassel. He quite naturally thought this was rather odd attire for a respected surgeon, and for the first time began to suspect that the fantastic tales told by General Blake might have; some factual basis.

Copperthwaite’s suspicions deepened immediately when Major General Henry Blake descended the aircraft’s stairs to greet Dr. Pierce. Dr. Pierce made a strange noise (sort of a howling scream) and then embraced General Blake, kissing him noisily and wetly on the forehead and both cheeks.

Despite the evident warmth of the greeting, however, Dr. Pierce flatly refused to go aboard the aircraft.

“For all I know, Henry,” he announced, “you guys have started another war, and I’m not going to get involved.”

As Undersecretary Copperthwaite watched this scene from the top of the stairway, he became aware of more flashing lights and the sound of

another siren, this time coming from the direction of the ocean. As he watched, a very strange vehicle, looking for all the world like a swamp buggy of the type utilized by the oil industry in the swamps of Louisiana, lurched up and over the breakwater at the end of the runway, and, emitting large clouds of blue diesel smoke from twin, vertical, chrome-plated exhaunt pipes, roared up to Air Force One.

Copperthwaite stared at it with disbelief. The driver, was a young woman, a very amply endowed young woman, wearing a bikini. The passenger, who stood up in the front seat supporting himself by hanging onto the chrome-plated siren-and-flashing-light assembly (which read “New Orleans Police Department”) was wearing swimming trunks. Both passengers were covered with mud.

“What the hell is that?” Major General Henry Blake, demanded.

“That’s Trapper, Henry,” Hawkeye said. “Surely you remember Trapper John?”

“What’s that thing?”

“That’s no thing, Henry, that’s Mrs. Trapper.”

“That thing they’re riding on!”

“That’s a swamp buggy,” Hawkeye said. “It belongs to my kid. He lets us use it.”

The passengers alighted.

“God damn!” the bathing-trunked male cried in delight. “Henry Blake!” And he, too, wrapped Major General Blake in a bear hug and kissed him wetly. When he turned him loose, he turned to the woman in the bikini.

“Sweetie,” he said. “You’ve heard me talk of Colonel Henry Blake? Commanding officer of the 4077th MASH?”

“Oh, yes!” Mrs. Lucinda McIntyre said. “You’re the Christian gentleman whose noble example kept my Trapper pure for me!” She, too, wrapped her arms around General Blake, kissed him wetly, this time on the mouth, and then still hanging onto him, said, “I just don’t know how to thank you!” Then she suddenly turned, clambered back onto the swamp

buggy, and throwing something, called “Catch, you darling man!” Major General Henry Blake instinctively put out his hands and arms and caught what was thrown. It was roughly fifteen pounds of clams, freshly plucked from the mudflats of Spruce Harbor, some of which were leaking through the open weaving of the burlap bag in which they were now contained.

“Spruce Harbor clams, Henry,” Hawkeye said. “Finest kind.”

“I don’t know quite how to thank you, Mrs. McIntyre,” General Blake said, trying with absolutely no success at all to flick mud lumps off his uniform with his left hand while he held the dripping sack with his right.

“Think nothing of it,” Mrs. Lucinda McIntyre said.

“I’m almost afraid to ask,” Trapper said. “But what brings you to our neck of the woods, Henry? What did you do, run out of gas?”

“Hawkeye,” Lucinda McIntyre said, “shame on you!”

Hawkeye looked at her in some confusion.

“Never look a gift horse in the mouth,” Lucinda said solemnly.

“Open wide, Henry, and tell us what this is all about,” Trapper John said.

“Your country calls, Dr. McIntyre,” General Blake said.

“Lucinda,” Trapper John said. “Grab the clams back and run for your life!”

“And you, too, Dr. Pierce,” General Blake said.

Undersecretary of State Copperthwaite descended the stairway, made a little bow with his head, and extended an envelope, elaborately sealed with wax and a red ribbon. “Messrs. Benjamin Franklin Pierce, M.D., and John Francis Xavier McIntyre, M.D.” was ornately lettered on the envelope, and the words THE SECRETARY OF STATE WASHINGTON were embossed on it in gold.

Hawkeye gingerly tore it open.

“If this is another draft notice, Henry, you won’t live to get back on that plane,” he said. He took out the short letter and read it:

THE SECRETARY OF STATE

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Messrs. B. F. Pierce, M.D., F.A.C.S., and J. F. X. McIntyre, M.D., F.A.C.S.

Gentlemen:

This letter will reach you by hand of the Honorable F. Radcliffe Copperthwaite, Undersecretary of State for Politico-Military Affairs. First, let me say that Undersecretary Copperthwaite (who has a wife and three fine children) enjoys my fullest confidence and should not be judged by what is, after all, simply a superficial speech characteristic and strange little walk.

Undersecretary Copperthwaite and Major General Henry Blake will brief you on the situation, which is, as you will see, not the sort of thing one would wish to write down on paper.

I hope that your busy schedule will permit you to again volunteer your professional services to your country as you both have so unselfishly done in the past. In the event either of you feels that you are not in a position to leave your home, your family, and your practice of medicine voluntarily at this time, permit me to remind you both of your present status. Through some administrative oversight, you were never actually discharged from the Army after the Korean War, and are, in fact, members of the Army Reserve, subject to recall in the national interest. In a little chat I happened to have with the Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, he told me he needs a gynecologist in Ooogooluk, Alaska, and a pediatrician on Ungguku Atoll, American Samoa.

I feel sure, however, that your well-known selflessness and dedication to your profession will permit you to make your services available to Undersecretary Copperthwaite and General Blake voluntarily.

With all good personal wishes, I am,

Most sincerely,

The signature was illegible. Hawkeye idly thought, before he started to scream, that most schoolteachers of his acquaintance had terrible handwriting; the Secretary of State apparently was no exception.

Major General Blake, while Hawkeye had been reading the letter from the Secretary of State, had gotten rid of the dripping sack of clams by handing it to the very large Air Force master sergeant who had been first off the plane when the door had opened, and who had been standing ever since with his chin and his stomach sucked in, according to regulations, at the foot of the stairway.

"Henry," he said, his voice choked with emotion. "All these years, I believed you were … different."

"Ask not, Doctor," General Blake said solemnly, "what you can do for your country. Ask what your country can do for you."

"I don't think you have that fine quotation quite right," Undersecretary Copperthwaite said. "But no matter, we can now proceed with the briefing." He made a little bow toward Mrs. McIntyre and gestured toward the stairway to the door of Air Force One. Lucinda McIntyre sought and found her husband's hand and together they slowly climbed the stairway.

There is a back-up system for everything on Air Force One. Standing mostly hidden behind the enormous landing gear was the back-up Air Force master sergeant to the master sergeant standing at rigid attention with the sack of clams at the foot of the stairway. Responding to a barely perceptible, well-rehearsed signal (the master sergeant with the clams stamped his right foot twice), the master sergeant behind the landing gear came out quickly to render whatever assistance was needed. He put his hands out, in a military manner, to take the clams, but never quite made it.

"Clams!" Hawkeye Pierce screamed. "I'll give you clams, Henry!" He snatched the dripping sack from the sergeant and, swinging it around his head like an aboriginal club, set out after Major General Henry Blake.

The response of the two sergeants was automatic. After all, they had undergone extensive training to handle just such a contingency as this one. ("Contingency 21.6: Madman attacks VIP passenger.") In less time than it takes to tell, Dr. Benjamin Franklin Pierce, M.D., F.A.C.S., was spread-eagled on the runway, one Air Force master sergeant sitting on his back, the

other holding the bag of clams in one hand and a small black notebook in the other. He read aloud from the small notebook: “You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can and will be used against you. If you desire, you may have an attorney present while being questioned, and if you are unable to afford one, one will be appointed to represent you at no charge.”

Dr. John Francis Xavier Mclntyre, into whose hands Dr. Pierce had thrust the letter from the Secretary of State, watched the flying tackle performed by the sergeants with approval. Clean, sure, precisely executed. Then he began to read the letter. His reaction to it was unlike Hawkeye’s. He began to weep, chest heaving, tears running shamelessly down his cheeks. He turned to look at Major General Henry Blake.

“Henry,” he said, his voice choked with emotion. “All these years, I believed you were … different.”

“Ask not, Doctor,” General Blake said solemnly, “what you can do for your country. Ask what your country can do for you.”

“I don’t think you have that fine quotation quite right,” Undersecretary Copperthwaite said. “But no matter, we can now proceed with the briefing.” He made a little bow toward Mrs. McIntyre and gestured toward the stairway to the door of Air Force One. Lucinda McIntyre sought and found her husband’s hand and together they slowly climbed the stairway.

Hawkeye, suspended a foot off the ground between the two master sergeants, was carried up the stairway a moment later. The door was closed. The master sergeant resumed his position at the foot of the stairs.

Lucinda McIntyre was provided with a bathrobe bearing the Presidential Seal, ushered into a compartment, and offered her choice of coffee, tea, or milk. Hawkeye and Trapper were marched to a compartment in the rear of the aircraft and installed in arm chairs. A movie screen was unrolled from the ceiling, a slide projector set up, and the lights dimmed.

Undersecretary Copperthwaite armed himself with a pointer and took up a position facing them.

“What you are about to see and/or hear is classified security material,” he intoned. “Divulgence of what you are about to see and/or hear to

unauthorized persons would constitute a violation of the National Security Act of 1960, as amended, and render you liable to severe penalties. May we have the first slide, please?"

The briefing, which began with a shot of the Sieur de Bienville and the redheaded dummy on the zebra, on which the words "TOP SECRET" were superimposed, was rather complete. There were photographs of the others who were to receive French decorations, including one of Hot Lips in her vestments as Mother Emeritus of the God-Is-Love-In-All-Forms Christian Church, Inc., and of J. Robespierre O'Reilly, chairman of the board of the ROR Corporation. The latter came as something of a surprise not only to Hawkeye and Trapper, but to General Blake as well.

"I'll be damned," General Blake said. "If I didn't know better, I would swear that's ol' Radar."

"I'll be damned if that's *not* Radar," Hawkeye said. "What was it you called him, Copperhead?"

"Copperthwaite," the Undersecretary said, a little testily.

"I thought you were Copperthwaite."

"I am. The gentleman now on the screen is J. Robespierre O'Reilly."

"You've been misinformed again," Trapper John said flatly. "That's Rader O'Reilly, late corporal of the 4077th MASH."

"I hardly think that's possible," Copperthwaite said. "Mr. O'Reilly is chairman of the board of the third largest fast-food operation in the world."

"Then it's Radar, all right," Hawkeye said. "He is the fastest food operator I've ever seen. What are the French giving him a medal for? Fast eating?"

"Mr. O'Reilly is going to be decorated for his contributions to the culinary arts," Copperthwaite said.

General Blake and Drs. Pierce and McIntyre began to laugh, and Copperthwaite somewhat snappily called for the next slide.

When the briefing was finally over, Copperthwaite ordered the lights in the cabin turned on again. "As you can see, gentlemen," he said, "the

Department of State has given a good deal of thought to this operation. No detail has been overlooked."

"There is one factor you haven't considered," Hawkeye said. "A factor over which the United States Government has no control whatever."

"Impossible," Copperthwaite said.

"If you think our wives are going to let us go off to Paris by ourselves," Hawkeye went on, "you're bananas."

"A cultural attaché of the United States Information Service," Copperthwaite said, "is at this moment calling on Mrs. Pierce, pointing out to her the many cultural and social attractions to be found in Ooogooluk, Alaska. Another attaché is helping Mrs. McIntyre pass the time waiting for you by presenting similar data regarding Ungguku Atoll, American Samoa."

"I have a sickening feeling that he's telling the truth, Hawkeye," Trapper said.

"The schedule," Copperthwaite announced, "calls for us to be airborne, en route to San Francisco, in fifty-five minutes. If you hurry, that should give you enough time to pack."

"I'm not going anywhere," Hawkeye said flatly, "before nine o'clock tomorrow morning."

"I'm afraid you're going to have to readjust your plans, Dr. Pierce," Copperthwaite said ominously.

"Wait a minute," General Blake said. He had heard Hawkeye make flat statements only a few times before, but he knew that when he made them, nothing, neither the Undersecretary of State nor, for that matter, the entire United States Government, was capable of changing his mind. "What happens between now and nine tomorrow morning, Hawkeye?"

"I'm going to jerk a gallbladder out of an old pal of mine," Hawkeye said.

As far as General Blake, who was, after all, originally Dr. Blake, was concerned, that settled it. He had long ago learned that the practice of

medicine was, together with his wife and children, about the only thing Hawkeye took seriously.

“Schedule the departure for nine thirty in the morning,” General Blake said.

“You can’t order me around like that,” Copperthwaite said.

“I just did,” General Blake said simply.

“Come on over to the house, Henry,” Hawkeye said. “I want you to meet the wife.”

“What am I supposed to do?” Copperthwaite asked. “Frankly, my dear,” Trapper John said, in his best Clark Gable accent, “I don’t give a damn.”

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Chapter Six

Although she did her level best to conceal it, Mary Pierce's reaction to the cultural attaché's solemn pronouncement that it was Hawkeye's duty to travel to Paris, France, there to render patriotic service to his country for approximately two weeks, filled her with something close to joy.

In a time when most of her peer group was bitterly complaining that their mates could find no time for their homes and families, Hawkeye was, perhaps predictably, the exception. With the exception of a five-day sojourn to New Orleans coinciding with the birth of their youngest child, it had been impossible in the past ten years to dislodge Hawkeye from the Pierce home for more than twenty-four consecutive hours.

While it was true that he hunted, fished, clammed, and played golf and poker, none of these recreational activities kept him out of his home and comfortable, if somewhat sagging, arm chair before the fireplace for more than six or eight hours at a time.

This was not nearly long enough time for Mary to have the house painted, although it had gone so long without interior painting that she was tempted to offer it for one of the "Before" photographs used in Sherwin-Williams advertisements in *House & Garden.*

Mary Pierce was aware, furthermore, that Lucinda McIntyre had a similar cross to bear. Trapper, despite dire predictions to the contrary, had become just about as much a revoltingly dedicated home-lover as Hawkeye following his marriage to Lucinda. A hurried conference between the wives, shortly after the entourage arrived at the Pierce home in the swamp buggy, resulted in the following joint statement:

"Undersecretary Copperthwaite, General Blake: Recognizing that from time to time each citizen of this great republic may be called upon to make a great personal sacrifice in the national interest, we grant, with heavy heart, permission for you to take our husbands to Paris, France, asking you to remember only that: they also serve, who sit and wait."

General Blake, touched, blew his nose loudly. Undersecretary Copperthwaite shook their hands in both of his, and nodded warmly at them. While General Blake and Undersecretary Copperthwaite were

congratulating Hawkeye and Trapper on their fine, understanding wives, the ladies excused themselves and retired to Mary Pierce's sewing room. While Mary Pierce telephoned the Spruce Harbor Painting Service, Hardware and Antique Salon, alerting them to stand by for action, Lucinda McIntyre, writing feverishly, prepared the list of the perfume, eau de cologne, and bath oils the husbands would understandably wish to purchase in Paris as a small token of their appreciation of the sacrifice of their wives.

Undersecretary Copperthwaite politely declined the invitation to spend the night on Trapper John and Lucinda's couch, and returned to Air Force One. He felt quite sure that he could rely on General Blake to get the two doctors to the plane on time. Furthermore he had always wondered what it would be like to spend the night in the Presidential bed, and now he had his chance.

The smile on his face vanished, however, when he walked into the Presidential Suite. Airwoman Third Class Mary-Margaret Maguire was sprawled on the President's bed, telephone in hand.

"What's this?" he demanded, with all the outraged indignation at his command.

"It's for you," Airwoman Maguire said, handing him the telephone. Even before he heard the familiar, even famous, fog-horn-like tones over the radio-telephone, Undersecretary Copperthwaite knew in his bones that he was about to converse with Congresswoman Hortense V. Clumpp (Radical-Liberal, California).

Five minutes later, Copperthwaite, rubbing his ear, went to the communications compartment and send an urgent coded message to the Secretary of State:

> SECURITY OF MISSION COMPROMISED BY SNOOKUMS. CONGRESSWOMAN CLUMPP KNOWS FULL SCHEDULE AND PLANS TO BOARD AIRCRAFT IN SAN FRANCISCO WITH INTENTION GOING TO PARIS. PLEASE ADVISE. COPPERTHWAITE.

He had to wait thirty minutes for a reply. And then finally, the radio-teletype began to clatter:

FROM DEPT OF STATE WASHINGTON

TO UNDERSECRETARY OF STATE COPPERTHWAITE

ABOARD AIR FORCE ONE

FOLLOWING, CLASSIFIED TOP SECRET FROM THE SECRETARY OF STATE, FOR EYES OF UNDERSECRETARY COPPERTHWAITE ONLY. QUOTE: PRAY. UNQUOTE. END MESSSAGE.

At five forty-five the next morning, General Blake was awakened from a rather frightening dream in which he was running naked and barefoot down an endless gravel road to find the Pierce dog, Oscar, nibbling at his toes. The smell of frying bacon and percolating coffee filled his nostrils. It took him a moment to remember that he had been bedded down on the Pierce couch.

“Up and at ‘em, Henry!” Hawkeye called, followed by a rather credible simulation of the reveille bugle call.

“Why are we getting up so early?” Henry Blake asked.

“We’re taking out a gallbladder in forty-five minutes, Henry,” Hawkeye said. “I told you about it.”

“*We’re* doing what?”

“You know,” Hawkeye said. “Surgery. Men in green coats. Sharp knives. Sweaty brows, and a machine that makes dink-dink-dink noises.”

“Why me?”

“In the olden days, you used to be a pretty good cutter, and this patient is important to me,” Hawkeye said. “She’s the first person I ever told I wanted to be a doctor.”

Over breakfast, and since they were alone, General Blake brought up the subject of Hot Lips Houlihan, former chief nurse of the 4077th MASH. Since she was going to be on the trip, and since the FBI report on her, describing her as the Mother Emeritus of the God-Is-Love-In-All-Forms Christian Church, Inc., seemed a little out of character for a woman Blake

remembered rather fondly as all woman, but not at all motherly, Blake was naturally a little curious.

Hawkeye told him what had happened:

"After retiring from the Army," Hawkeye explained, "Hot Lips went to Brazil as chief nurse of a mission hospital. She had gone to New Orleans in connection with mission business, and there had met the Reverend Buck Wilson."

"You're telling me *Hot Lips* got *religion?"* General Blake asked incredulously.

"In a sense, Henry, in a sense," Hawkeye said. He went on to explain that after a whirlwind courtship, Hot Lips had married the Reverend Wilson. "He was a rather interesting fellow, as clergymen go," Hawkeye went on, explaining that the Reverend Wilson's flock had consisted of males of rather exquisite grace, plus a scattering of females given to bobbed hair, severe tailoring, and cigars.

"You said *'was'?"*

"The Reverend expired on his wedding day," Hawkeye said. "On the nuptial couch. The postmortem indicated heart failure, probably brought on by overexertion."

"How terrible!" General Blake said.

"I understand there was some talk, among his flock, of burning Hot Lips at the stake as a witch," Hawkeye said. "But cooler heads prevailed. At an emergency meeting of the Board of Deacons, it was pointed out that when Reverend Wilson had announced his intention to marry, he had said the congregation 'was not about to lose a Brother, but rather to gain a Mother,' and that he had twice referred to the title of the church 'God-Is-Love-In-*All-Forms* Christian Church, Inc.,' and cautioned his flock against the sin of reverse snobbery.

"The upshoot of the emergency meeting of the Board of Deacons was that a delegation called upon Hot Lips… Widow Wilson … not only to express their most profound sympathy in her loss, but to call her to the service of the church her husband had founded. She was offered the newly created position of 'Mother Emeritus' of the body, not to take her late

mate's position in the pulpit (they already had a defrocked Episcopal for the sermonizing) but simply to serve as a living symbol that the God-Is-Love-In-All-Forms Christian Church, Inc, has room in its ranks for those of the heterosexual persuasion.

"I understand the service of investiture was a major social event," Hawkeye said. "It certainly received wide publicity, even though, by some strange coincidence, each and every one the other members of the New Orleans Protestant, Catholic, Hebrew, and Zen Buddhist Ministerial Association had made other plans for the evening and could not participate."

"And that's what Hot Lips is doing? Acting as some kind of cockamamie Mother Superior to a bunch of kooks?" General Blake asked.

"Judge not, Henry, lest ye be judged, as it says in the Good Book," Hawkeye said piously. "Actually, Hot Lips is serving as chief nurse of a nursing school. She mothers her late husband's flock in her spare time. I expect that a few days in Paris will be just what the doctor ordered."

"How come you know so much about it?"

"Trapper John and I happened to be there when she met Reverend Wilson," Hawkeye said. "Would you like to hear about that, too?"

"I don't think so," Henry said firmly.

Hawkeye pulled into the parking lot of the Spruce Harbor Medical Center and parked his car in a spot which a large sign announced was "reserved for the INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE**."**

"I see you don't pay any more attention to signs these days than you ever did," Henry said.

"On the contrary," Hawkeye said. "I put that sign up myself. It used to say reserved for me, and, of course, I never got to use it. But it takes braver souls than we have here at Spruce Harbor to steal a parking space from an IRS man."

Hawkeye led General Blake down the hospital's shiny corridors to Miss Fenwick's room, and introduced them to each other.

Miss Fenwick, although a little groggy from preoperative medication, was still in possession of enough of her faculties to want to know whether or not Air Force One had really been at Spruce Harbor Airport, and if so, what for.

Hawkeye told her just about everything that had transpired, as Henry Blake stood by aghast at the breach of security.

“I don’t believe a word of it, Hawkeye,” she said with a smile. “But I’m glad to see that you haven’t lost your sense of humor.”

“I’ll bring you a bottle of French perfume,” Hawkeye said. “To prove it. What would you like?”

” ‘Passionate Evening’,” Miss Fenwick said. “And now let’s get this show on the road.”

As they scrubbed, Henry Blake said, “Your role in this whole operation is supposed to be a secret, you know.”

“A secret? I’ll have you know I’m chief of surgery,” Hawkeye replied.

“I meant the real reason you’re going to Paris,” Henry Blake said.

“Whatever you say, General, sir,” Hawkeye said.

“And until this is over, please stop calling me ‘General,’ ” Henry said.

Trapper came into the scrubroom.

“I’m worried,” he said.

“What about?” Hawkeye asked.

“This operation,” Trapper said.

“I just looked at her charts,” Hawkeye said. “She should come through this all right. She’s a tough old bird.”

“I mean going to Paris,” Trapper said.

“Sorry, this gentleman here we can’t call General says we can’t talk about that operation. National security, you know.”

“To hell with national security,” Trapper said. “I’m talking about my Lucinda. She seems almost anxious to get me out of the way.”

“That’s certainly understandable,” Hawkeye said. “How is she going to carry on shamelessly with Moosenose Bartlett never knowing where you’re going to pop in?” He walked through the door to the operating room before Trapper could reply, and took up his position at the table.

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Chapter Seven

After a very brief flight from Spruce Harbor (Maine) International Airport, Air Force One touched down at Boston's Logan Field and loaded aboard Mr. and Mrs. Archibald Cabot VI. Mr. Cabot, proprietor of a very large wine importing firm, was, like J. Robespierre O'Reilly, about to be made a member of the *Grande Compagnie de Gourmets Frangais.*

Hawkeye, Trapper John, and General Henry Blake watched out the window as the departure ceremony took place. The Mayor of Boston greeted Undersecretary Copperthwaite and presented him with the key to the city. The Boston Police Band played "The Star-Spangled Banner." The Mayor of Boston then introduced the French Consul General resident in Boston. The Boston Police Band then played "The Marseillaise." The French Consul General then introduced Mr. Cabot, who gave a short but touching speech about the long ties of friendship between the United States and France. The French Consul General than made a short but touching speech on the same subject, following which he kissed Mr. Cabot, who blushed, on both cheeks. Mr. and Mrs. Cabot then climbed the stairway to the door of Air Force One, turned to wave at well-wishers and photographers, and then stepped inside the aircraft as the Boston Police Band played a medley of "Auld Lang Syne" and "Frere Jacques."

The door of Air Force One closed, and Airwoman Third Class Mary-Margaret Maguire led Mr. and Mrs. Cabot down the aisle to Compartment Four, normally occupied by the President's personal secretary.

Just as Mrs. Cabot noticed the Presidential Seal on the door of Compartment One and gave her husband a discreet, Boston-ladylike nudge to call his attention to it, the door swung open.

Trapper John, attired in khaki trousers and a sweatshirt on which was printed SPRUCE HARBOR HIGH SCHOOL, smiled and spoke:

"You want to play a little two-bit limit poker, friend?"

Mr. and Mrs. Cabot fled down the aisle. Trapper John shrugged, went back in the Presidential Compartment, sat down at the table, picked up the white telephone, and spoke crisply into it. "More beer," he said, and then returned his attention to the game.

Very much the same scene was repeated at the airports in Eric, Pennsylvania, Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and Akron, Ohio, where a travel agent (with wife), a food importer (with wife), and the proprietor of Fashions Francaises (with husband), respectively, joined the party. There were no poker players in their number.

At Kansas City, the boarding ceremony proved somewhat different. The senior Senator from Kansas, rather than the Mayor of Kansas City, was at the foot of the stairway to greet Undersecretary Copperthwaite, and instead of the key to the city, Copperthwaite was handed a bowl of Mother O'Reilly's Irish Stew. The Kansas City Sanitation Department Drum and Bugle Corps offered their rendition of "The Stars and Stripes Forever," following which the Senator introduced J. Robespierre O'Reilly, founder, president, and chairman of the board of the ROR Corporation. Mr. O'Reilly then spoke to the crowd, most of whom were employees of the ROR Corporation, who had been given the day off because of the occasion.

He had just gotten to the part where he exhorted his audience to ask not what ROR Corporation could do for them, but what they could do for the ROR Corporation hen Trapper John appeared at the door of Air Force One**.**

"Hey, Radar!" he shouted. J. Robespierre O'Reilly turned to look up the stairway. His mouth fell open.

"I'll be goddamned," Mr. O'Reilly said, his words carried by the last word in public address system equipment across the airport's broad expanses.

"Did you bring any money?" Trapper John asked. He waved a deck of playing cards. Mr. O'Reilly abandoned the microphone and trotted up the stairs. He and Trapper John embraced each other. Since Trapper John was a full foot taller than Mr. O'Reilly, this resulted in Mr. O'Reilly being lifted a full foot off the floor. The two of them then disappeared inside Air Force One.

Mr. O'Reilly's employees' surprise at the strange behavior of their employer and chief (his strong language was normally limited to a fervent "golly," or, rarely, under conditions of extreme stress, to a "goldarn") was nothing compared to the surprise of F. Radcliffe Copperthwaite whose

preconception of Mr. O'Reilly was based on the FBI report of the gentleman. Mr. O'Reilly's firm, the FBI reported, the ROR Corporation, in which he owned the controlling interest, had grown in a relatively short time into one of the world's largest fast-food operations. From lambs and sheep gamboling on ROR Corporation pastures as far away as Australia and Argentina through the ROR Building Company (which had built some 1,044 Mother O'Reilly's Irish Stew Parlors) to the ROR Paper and Plastics Company, which manufactured the paper bowls and plastic spoons with which millions of people daily ate Mother O'Reilly's Stew, it was a self-contained operation. Mother O'Reilly's Stew, in fact, was coming close to replacing the hamburger and apple pie as America's favorite food.

Mr. O'Reilly himself, the FBI reported, lived for his work. A bachelor, his idea of fun was serving as chief umpire of the ROR Corporation's International Softball League. There were no women in his life, and he customarily drove a standard ROR Corporation panel delivery truck emblazoned with Mother O'Reilly's Famous Smiling Irish Face instead of the shining black limousine favored by others who had worked as far up the corporate ladder as he.

Like many small men, Mr. O'Reilly possessed a certain quality of aloofness and dignity. As far as the FBI had been able to find out, no one called him "Robespierre" to his face, or even "ROR." He was Mr. O'Reilly, even when being shouted at for a bad call on the softball field. He was never seen (off the softball field) without a white shirt and necktie, or for that matter, without his double-breasted, banker's gray suit and black shoes (or, when the weather dictated, his homburg and velvet-collared chesterfield). He did not smoke, and had never been seen with a beer, much less a drink, in his hand. The FBI said it succinctly: Mr. O'Reilly has no known vices.

And yet, here abroad Air Force One, right before God and F. Radcliffe Copperthwaite, he was greeting not only these two medical maniacs like long-lost brothers, but Major General Blake as well.

Tossing his homburg and chesterfield on the First Lady's chair, J. Robespierre O'Reilly sat down at the Presidential conference table, pulled down his tie, reached for a bottle of beer with one hand and a stack of chips

with the other, and announced, “Let’s play some cards, and no shoe salesmen allowed.”

F. Radcliffe Copperthwaite, of course, had no way of knowing that J. Robespierre O’Reilly had just been reunited with three of the four people in his life O’Reilly held dear. (The fourth, Mrs. Margaret Houlihan Wachauf Wilson, R.N., would board the plane at New Orleans, although Copperthwaite, of course, could not know that either.)

The truth of the matter was that J. Robespierre O’Reilly had a deep and dark secret. Under some circumstances, he was telepathic. That is, he could read minds. He had been vaguely aware of this ability since puberty, but it really had not, so to speak, come into focus until he had been drafted and sent to Korea. There he could read practically everybody’s mind, where previously, the mind-reading had come and gone at unpredictable intervals. It finally dawned on him that it was tied to stress. When he was worried, or frightened, the messages came in loud and clear. Since he was scared nearly out of his skin by practically everything in Korea, he was receiving mental messages twenty-four hours a day, every day.

His first practical application of this aberration was at the poker table in the enlisted men’s quarters of the 4077th MASH, to which O’Reilly had been assigned as clerk-typist to the commanding officer. His fantastic success at the game had come to the attention of Lieutenant Colonel Henry Blake, Medical Corps, U.S. Army, who had to face the incredible possibility that his five-foot-two, bespectacled, 135 pounds (with boots) company clerk was a card shark in disguise.

He felt that his initial suspicions were at least partially confirmed after he had played a little sociable game of gin rummy (for Coke bottle caps) with Corporal O’Reilly and taken a real licking. A desperate situation called for desperate measures. Colonel Blake recognized his duty to spare his troops from the evil activities of a card shark, but on the other hand, he had been absolutely unable to catch O’Reilly cheating.

Colonel Blake sought professional, or at least semiprofessional, assistance. He explained the situation to the three best poker players in the Chorwon Valley-Iron Triangle area. Captain Walter Koskiusko Waldowski, Dental Corps, U.S. Army, and Captains Benjamin Franklin Pierce and James Francis Xavier McIntyre, Medical Corps, U.S. Army, were

summoned for a conference. Captain Waldowski's Painless Polish Poker and Dental Clinic was known throughout the Eighth United States Army as the place where you could be relieved of either a troublesome molar or a month's pay in a matter of minutes and with no pain whatever.

Colonel Blake had looked away from the Painless Pole's poker table because the Pole and his pals never played with troops, limiting their extraction techniques to those comrades-in-arms whom the Congress had seen fit to identify as officers and gentlemen. The officers should know enough, Colonel Blake thought, to fend for themselves.

The initial reaction of the trio to Henry Blake's solemn announcement that Corporal O'Reilly was a card shark was hysteria. While Captain Waldowski rolled on the floor, clutching his stomach, Captains Pierce and McIntyre hung onto the support pole of the tent.

"Play with him," Henry Blake said. "Take his money. If you three olive-drab *banditos* can take his money, you can keep it. I'll make it up to him. On the other hand, if he takes yours, that's your problem."

It was a challenge that could not be ignored. A special table was erected in the tent housing Captains Pierce and McIntyre and Major Francis Burns. To set up the table it was necessary to move Major Burns's bunk outside, but it was felt that Major Burns, who shared Major Houlihan's bed, would not notice for at least a week, and they would need only one night.

The game, which was expected to last until midnight, if not all night, began at 1830 hours (half past six, as people tell time). By 2030 hours (8:30 P.M., or two hours later), Corporal O'Reilly not only had all of the money initially possessed by Captains Waldowski, Pierce, and McIntyre, but their watches, class rings, stethoscopes, extra boots, twenty-eight rolls of dental floss, and their jointly owned Marilyn Monroe calendar as well.

A second conference was held, that same night, in the office of the commanding officer. The problem was analyzed. The Painless Pole had learned the game of poker in Hamtramck, Michigan, where there were about as many card mechanics as there were mechanics repairing automobile transmissions or the engines of the Illinois Central Railroad. He had received baccalaureate and post-graduate degrees in the science while

at the University of Michigan, in dental school, and while employed as the staff dentist of the Cook County Jail in Chicago.

"The little guy," he said, with undisguised admiration, "is a master!"

"His fingerwork," Trapper John joined in, "is beyond criticism. I didn't even see him wiggle."

"I told you so," Henry Blake said.

"He's no card mechanic," Hawkeye said. "He handles a deck of cards like Henry does."

"You're not going to sit there with a straight face and tell me he suddenly got lucky!" Henry Blake replied, vaguely aware he had just been insulted.

"He reads minds," Hawkeye said.

"Absurd!" Colonel Blake said.

"Impossible!" the Painless Pole said.

"Fantastic!" Trapper John said.

"He reads minds," Hawkeye said. "And I'm prepared to prove it, if Henry will stake us to start another game and will loan us some of his dirty pictures."

"What dirty pictures?" Colonel Blake demanded with outraged dignity.

"The ones in the middle drawer," Hawkeye said, pointing to the file cabinet, "Filed under Mammiform Protuberances (Extraordinary)."

"What do you want those for?" Henry Blake asked, as he reached for his wallet.

The game was reconvened the next night, everything set up the same way as it had been for the first game, except that neatly stapled to the two-by-four behind O'Reilly's chair were some of the more interesting extraordinary mammiform protuberances from Henry Blake's file, two Jane Russell's, two Marilyn Monroe's, and one Roberta Haynes.

O'Reilly, although he modestly averted his eyes from the display of photographs, seemed quite confident as he sat down to play. Trapper John

and the Painless Pole followed Hawkeye's instructions to the letter. They examined their cards for as brief a period as possible, just long enough to see they had received the proper number of them. Then they diverted their whole attention to the row of photographs stapled to the two-by-four behind O'Reilly. They became peripherally aware that O'Reilly rapidly lost his calm composure. Not only did he stare at them, individually and together, with a fierce intensity, but he began to blush.

In just as much time as it had taken the three of them to lose all their money, jewelry, extra clothing, and the four-color calendar photograph of Marilyn Monroe, they won it all back, plus all of O'Reilly's cash, his jewelry, his supply of *Batman* and *Wonder Woman* comic books, and crushing him in mind and spirit, his teddy bear.

He was given the night to toss and turn over his predicament, then early the next morning summoned to a conference presided over by Hawkeye (Colonel Blake refusing to have anything to do with it) and the chaplain of the 4077th MASH, Father James Patrick Mulcahy.

Chaplain Mulcahy, who was more popularly, known as "Dago Red," gave him a rather impressive little chat about the evils of cheating at poker, even by telepathy, and extracted a promise from the shaken soldier that he would never use this peculiar talent of his for dishonest purposes. When Father Mulcahy left, Hawkeye went on to explore the areas in which O'Reilly's talent could be exploited to the benefit of the 4077th MASH, its patients and staff. It was during this meeting that Robespierre O'Reilly became known as "Radar," although only Colonel Blake, and Captains Waldowski, McIntyre, Pierce, and Mulcahy, all sworn to secrecy, knew the reason why.

During the rest of the time they were in Korea, Radar's talents were diverted into more or less honorable channels. He was particularly valuable in logistics, which is what the Army calls supply. Never again was any supply sergeant in the Eighth United States Army able to hoard quantities of desirable goodies simply by announcing "There ain't none."

"I think you have forgotten," Radar would say, "the eight canned hams in the box marked 'axle grease,' and the six cases of beer in the bunker marked 'artillery fuses, danger.' "

The hams, beer, and a vast array of other supplies would be instantly produced by visibly shaken supply sergeants. Radar's logistic ability was so awesome that it overshadowed the negative aspects of his talent. Radar had taken to heart Chaplain Mulcahy's little talk about dishonest and immoral use of his telegraphic reception.

Trapper John caught him twice warning newly arrived nurses that Hawkeye had something besides the display of native Korean flora and fauna in mind when he offered to show them the banks of Imjin River. Neither would he sit in on poker games with visiting officers with an eye to fleecing them of their pay or personal possessions. In fact, he abandoned poker completely except for games with Trapper John, Hawkeye, the Painless Pole, and Colonel Blake. Being caught in the act of reading their poker hands had destroyed the very ability to do so, although the rest of their thoughts continued to come in loud and clear.

The ability to read minds, on reflection, is not an unqualified blessing. Radar was able to use it, of course, on his discharge from the Army, to rapidly rise from assistant dishwasher at the Kansas City Truck Stop to proprietor of the first Mother O'Reilly's Irish Stew Parlor. Three of four truck drivers had sent him the telepathic message, when they faced the Blue Plate Special, that what they really would like to have was a bowl of Irish Stew like Mother Used to Make. Winging it from there, of course, was simplicity itself, especially since Radar always knew what absolute minimum price a supplier would take for his goods, as well as what he was asking.

But most of the access he had to people's thoughts was disappointing. His reception increased with tension. When he was about to try to kiss a girl, in other words, her inner thoughts might as well have been written on a blackboard, and most of the messages were not very flattering.

It got worse as the ROR empire grew. He quickly learned that while tantalizing feminine lips might appear to seek his, their owner was considering not Robespierre O'Reilly's masculine charm, but the finer points of community property laws. One attractive blonde's mind he remembered with clarity. In her mind's eye, his lips had turned into a cornucopia pouring forth mink coats, Cadillac limousines, and square-cut diamonds.

He had remained a bachelor, and relatively friendless, and thus was understandably delighted to be reunited with his old pals and the commanding officer of the 4077th MASH. In all the time he had been reading their minds, none of them had ever wanted to play him for a patsy.

And when he tuned in to the minds aboard Air Force One now, it was like being back in the good ol' 4077th MASH: duly constituted authority (in the person of F. Radcliffe Copperthwaite) was absolutely convinced that all of them were lunatics who had somehow avoided the men in the white coats.

J. Robespierre O'Reilly looked up at F. Radcliffe Copperthwaite.

"None of us are going to get fall-down drunk and cause trouble with Congresswoman Clumpp," he said, which, of course, was precisely the possibility that Undersecretary Copperthwaite was at that instant considering. He opened his mouth in surprise. "When Horsey de la Chevaux and Hot Lips come aboard, please show them in here," he said.

"Hot Lips?" Copperthwaite asked. "What's her name now, Hawkeye?" Radar asked, and read Hawkeye's mind before Hawkeye could speak. "Mrs. Wilson," Radar said. "You may go, Mr. Copperthwaite."

"Shut up, Radar, and deal," Major General Blake said.

"Down and dirty," Radar said, complying, dealing General Blake a card. He watched as General Blake examined the card. Radar smiled from ear to ear as he realized he had absolutely no idea in the world what card General Blake had been dealt. For the first time in a long time, he would actually be able to play some poker.

Air Force One roared down the runway at Kansas City and pointed its nose for San Francisco.

In San Francisco, three hours and thirty minutes later, the delivery truck of Golden Gate Florists, Inc. raced onto the grounds of the San Francisco International Airport and screeched to a halt. The double doors burst open and two very large delivery boys emerged, holding between them a huge horseshoe wreath of flowers, on which was a green band bearing golden letters spelling out BON VOYAGE!

The driver of the truck reached behind him and took out what was known in the trade as a double dozen, long reds, in other words two dozen exquisite long-stem red roses wrapped gently in a sheath of pale green florist's paper. An airport security officer walked quickly up to them.

"What's this?"

"Official mission, the City of San Francisco," the florist truck driver said cryptically. "For Madame Kristina Korsky-Rimsakov."

"Who's she?"

"A opera singer," the driver said. "She's supposed to be leaving on Air Force One."

"Gotcha," the security officer said. "Departure Gate Twenty-eight. You better hurry. I just heard on the walkie-talkie that Air Force One just landed."

"The wreath is from the City Council," the truck driver said. "The double dozen, long reds, from Hizzoner the Mayor hisself. You better get us there on time."

"Follow me!" the security officer said, and they set out across the terminal at a trot, the security officer scattering people out of their way with blasts on his whistle. Now that he thought of it, he could put it all together. He had heard, of course, of Madame Kristina Whatsername. She was the star of the San Francisco Opera. It had been all over the papers. The French were going to give her some kind of metal. And he had seen the broad with the big boobs, the funny hat, and the bunch of creeps hanging around come into the airport. Obviously an opera singer. Looked like a Russian, too, one of them that drive locomotives and steam shovels.

Puffing, somewhat out of breath, they arrived at Departure Gate 28.

"Official flowers," the security officer called, and made a path through the curiosity-seekers and other security personnel. He gestured at the woman he had seen before. She was standing outside the building, watching stairs being rolled up to Air Force One. He didn't see the Mayor or any of the other big-shots, and wondered where they were.

The Mayor and the other civic officials who had intended to be at the airport to see Madame Kristina off to Paris were stuck in the same traffic jam which had delayed the Golden Gate Florists, Inc.

With his two assistants bringing up the rear, carrying the enormous BON VOYAGE wreath, the Golden Gate Florists, Inc. crew chief marched up to the big broad with the funny hat and the opera singer's chest and presented her with the double dozen, long reds.

"What's this?" the lady asked. One thing for sure, she wasn't a soprano. Her voice was closer in register and timbre to the fog horns sounding faintly in the distance.

Homer W. MacNamara hadn't risen to being a Golden Gate Florists, Inc. crew chief by brawn alone. He had just proved that by driving the last four miles to the airport in the wrong lane of the freeway to get around the traffic jam. And since there was no big-shot here to present the flowers officially, he would handle that, too. He snatched the cards off the wreath and from the pale green sheath of the double dozen, long reds.

"Bon Voyage," he read. "We look forward to reading in the press of your vocal triumphs in Paris. Best regards, City Council, San Francisco, California."

Madame Kristina Whatsername didn't look especially pleased with that. Her left eyebrow rose and she folded her arms over her ample bosom. Homer W. MacNamara tore open the other card. The Mayor was well known for his fancy words, and this time he outdid himself.

"Fly with the birds," Homer read, flushing a little, "thou gentle sweet angel with the voice of the birds of paradise. The hearts of the opera lovers of San Francisco will not beat again until your shimmering bell-like tones are returned to us."

"Who sent that one?" the lady said, now holding the double dozen, long reds by their stems. Homer wondered if there was such a thing as a lady basso profundo; this one certainly sounded like one.

"His Honor, the Mayor," Homer W. MacNamara said.

"He ain't here, right?"

“No, madame,” Homer said. “He is not.”

“You want to give him a message for me?”

“My pleasure, madame,” Homer said.

“You tell that miserable little creep what he can do with his flowers,” the lady said. She then swung the double dozen, long reds by their stems, striking Homer W. MacNamara about the face and sending him reeling back against the large horseshoe wreath. It, and the two assistants, fell to the ground. The lady then bent over Homer W. MacNamara and told him, in clear, lucid, unmistakable terms precisely where she wanted the Mayor to stick his flowers.

Then she stormed up the stairway just as F. Radcliffe Copperthwaite stepped out of the door of Air Force One.

“Why, good afternoon, Miss Clumpp,” he said. “How nice to see you.”

“If I told you once, you dump creep, I’ve told you fifty times. It’s *Congressperson* Clumpp to you,” she bellowed. “And just as soon as I find out which one of you male chauvinist pigs, you or that spluttering sausage-stuffer you work for, is responsible for the funny business with the flowers, I’m going to hand him his *tochis* on a platter.”

She pushed Undersecretary of State Copperthwaite out of the way, and disappeared inside Air Force One.

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Chapter Eight

From the windows of the Presidential compartment, Major General Blake, Chairman of the Board O'Reilly, and Drs. Pierce and Mclntyre had been watching the crowd gathered around Departure Gate 28, and with mixed emotions.

General Blake, who had encountered Congresswoman Clumpp before, was deeply concerned. Congressperson Clumpp had been a patient at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. She had burst a blood vessel on the floor of the House rising in protest to being described as "the gentle woman from California," a term which she felt grossly insulting. During her five-day hospitalization, she had driven two nurses and an radiologist to the staff psychiatrist; organized the laundry workers and sent them on a protest strike; and broken the nose of the head of the Eye, Ear, Nose and Throat Division, who had carelessly asked, "How's my girl doing today?" while doing his rounds.

Ms. Hortense V. Clumpp, MC, was nobody's girl.

Drs. Mclntyre and Pierce, it must in the interest of truth be related, were fascinated by the lady's supporters, who included a number of young females who had, as a symbolic gesture, abandoned their brassieres.

Radar O'Reilly was watching neither Congressperson Clumpp nor her supporters. His eye had fallen on another female. She was standing by herself, to the right of the howling horde around Congressperson Clumpp. She was a large woman, as large around the shoulders and chest as Hortense V. Clumpp, but, since she was a good foot taller, the effect was that she was statuesque where, truth to tell, Congressperson Clumpp was sort of fat and dumpy. There was a touch of gray in her hair, and she wore no makeup. Her face, Radar thought, was the face he had in mind for Mother O'Reilly (his own mother weighed 105 pounds, wore her hair in a beehive hairdo, and generally had a cigarette dangling from her mouth. Hers was not the sort of face one would wish to identify with something as wholesome as Mother O'Reilly's Irish Stew) and which no advertising artist had yet been able to produce, which explained the sort of fuzzy-faced logotype on the signs above 1,044 Mother O'Reilly's Irish Stew Parlors.

When Congressperson Clumpp attacked the guy with the two dozen long-stemmed roses, it was all Radar could do to keep from rushing out of Air Force One to offer the nice-looking lady his masculine protection. When the need to defend her had passed, he had the feeling he had lost an important opportunity. But as he watched, the nice-looking lady walked up to one of the Air Force master sergeants. The sergeant bent his head so that he could hear her, and then waved her up the stairway to Air Force One. As Radar climbed over the Presidential conference table to make his way to the door and the aisle, he realized that somehow he had known the nice-looking lady would have the sort of soft, gentle voice men would have to strain to hear.

Radar jerked the door with the Presidential Seal open just as the nice-looking lady came abreast of it. He had startled her, and he was instantly sorry. She looked at him, and for a moment, the signal came in loud and clear: “What a nice-looking man,” the nice-looking lady thought. “I hope I have a chance to get to meet him on the plane.”

“My name is Radar O’Reilly,” J. Robespierre O’Reilly blurted. “You want to play some poker?” He was instantly aware of his blunder. You just don’t ask nice-looking ladies like this if they want to play poker. Steeling himself for her reaction, he tuned into her thoughts. Nothing. He focused his attention on her again. Nothing but a little static.

“I used to play seven-card stud with my little brother,” the nice-looking lady said out loud. “Yes, I think that would be a very nice way to pass the time. Thank you for asking me.”

She smiled at Radar, a warm, gentle smile. Radar, struck dumb, held open the door to the Presidential compartment for her. Major General Blake and Drs. Pierce and McIntyre rose to their feet, because she was the kind of lady for whom gentlemen rise naturally, even in the middle of a poker game.

“Hello,” the nice lady said. “My name is Kristina Korsky-Rimsakov. My friends call me Kris.”

“She’s going to play poker with us,” Radar said.

“We are honored, ma’am,” General Blake said. “May I introduce Dr. McIntyre and Dr. Pierce? My name is Henry Blake, and I see you have

already met Mr. O'Reilly."

She shook their hands.

"Sit down, Radar, close your mouth, and deal," Hawkeye ordered. Radar didn't mind. Radar was in love. Nothing mattered.

"Why are you going to Paris, Kris?" Trapper asked. "Are the Frogs going to hang a medal on you, too?" The only operatic name with which Trapper John was at all familiar was Enrico Caruso, and he was a man.

"I'm sort of traveling under false pretenses," Kris said. "My little brother lives in Paris, and this gave me a chance to go see him. I worry about him, all alone in that city. I've heard some very worrisome things about Paris."

"I understand," Hawkeye said, grinning from ear to ear, "that it's wicked as all heck over there."

"The rules of the game are simple," Trapper John said. "Two-bit limit, except on the final card, when it's fifty cents. That okay with you?"

Rader, who had finished shuffling, slid the deck slyly to Kris. With a smooth, practiced gesture, she cut them, rapped them with her knuckles for luck, and slid them back.

"Let's play some cards," Kris said. "I think I should warn you, Kris," Hawkeye said. "Radar reads minds."

"Oh, I hope not," Kris said, and blushed. Rader gave into the temptation. He tuned in on Kris again, and again all he got was static.

F. Radcliffe Copperthwaite opened the door. He had looked all over the plane for Madame Kristina Korsky-Rimsakov; the only place she could possibly be was with the maniacs in the Presidential compartment.

"Madame," he announced, "there is no need for you to be here. You have, of course, a private compartment."

"If it's all right with you, sir," Kris said, "I'd like to stay here with these fellows and play poker."

F. Radcliffe Copperthwaite diplomatically closed the door and moved toward the sound of Congressperson Clumpp's voice.

At that moment, the aircraft commander shoved the throttles forward and Air Force One roared down the runway, banked over San Francisco Bay, and pointed its glistening nose toward New Orleans.

Congressperson Clumpp, whose announced intention it was to become the first woman President of the United States, passed the time between San Francisco and New Orleans in dispatching press releases over the communication system. There was something rather awesome in beginning a story with the dateline, “Aboard Air Force One, Somewhere over the United States.”

Congressperson’s Clumpp’s Presidential ambitions were based not so much on wishful thinking but rather on a simple statement of fact. There are more female-type people in the United States than there are male chauvinist pigs. What it boiled down to, in other words, was a matter of organization. Once the women of America realized that they outnumbered the men, political revolution was clearly possible.

When Airwoman Third Class Mary-Margaret Maguire had furnished her with the Top Secret passenger manifest for the Paris trip, Congressperson Hortense V. Clumpp had been fascinated to learn that Air Force One was to pick up in New Orleans a clergyperson, Margaret H. W. Wilson, Reverend Mother Emeritus of the God-Is-Love-In-All-Forms Christian Church, Inc. A good deal of thought had gone into Press Release #1, which had been sent off by radio the moment Air Force One had lifted its wheels:

> ABOARD AIR FORCE ONE, SOMEWHERE OVER THE UNITED STATES:
>
> *Congressperson Hortense V. Clumpp (Radical-Liberal, California) announced tonight that she was looking forward with great pleasure to meeting with the Reverend Mother Emeritus Margaret H. W. Wilson, distinguished New Orleans clergyperson, who is to be decorated by the French Government.*
>
> *“I have long been familiar with the Reverend Mother’s holy works,” Congressperson Clumpp said, “and while I am not a member of her particular faith, I take, together with all American women, great pride in her many ecclesiastical accomplishments. I join those who*

think of her as one of America's most distinguished theologians, and point to her with pride as a female far ahead of her time, who has willfully, even joyously, refused the traditional insulting roles of sweetheart, girl friend, mistress, and wife to devote her time and effort to furthering womankind.

"Not for her," Congressperson Clumpp continued, "the traditional degrading roles assigned women by the male chauvinist society. Severing herself completely from intolerable masculine domination, and unwanted male attention, Mother Emeritus Wilson stands before us all as a woman who all her lifetime has stood alone and proud.

"I look forward to discussing with Reverend Mother Emeritus Wilson a number of religious matters of great importance to liberated, free women, and to this great country, with an eye to freeing it from the last vestiges of male chauvinist pigism."

The story arrived in New Orleans, over the AP teletype, in the cable room of the New Orleans *Picaroon-Statesman,* thirty minutes after it had been dispatched from Air Force One in San Francisco. It arrived, as a matter of fact, at almost the same instant as Mother Emeritus Wilson herself. She arrived in the limousine of the publisher of the New Orleans *Picaroon-Statesman,* which glossy black vehicle had blocked the street in front of Brennan's Restaurant for two hours while Mother Emeritus Wilson had luncheon with Colonel Beauregard Beaucoupmots (Louisiana National Guard, Retired), publisher and majority stockholder of the *Picaroon-Statesman.*

"Miss Margaret," as Colonel Beaucoupmots referred to Mother Emeritus Wilson, certainly could not be expected to walk the whole block and a half from Brennan's Restaurant to the newspaper building. Not only was she a "fragile flower of womanhood" who should not be exposed to hordes of gaping tourists, but she was, Colonel Beaucoupmots had devoutly hoped, when he planned the luncheon, going to be somewhat in her cups.

Colonel Beaucoupmots had proposed marriage to Miss Margaret following the lamentable death of her husband, the late Reverend Wilson, about as often as he had published daily and Sunday editions of the *Picaroon-Statesman.* Reduced to something close to desperation by her

gentle but firm refusals to march down life's path with him, he had decided to prey on her natural feminine weakness and pop the question again, when she was weakened by the excitement of flying to Paris aboard Air Force One, and as well lubricated as the highly talented Brennan's bartenders could make her.

Luncheon, or the liquid portion of it, had begun when Colonel Beaucoupmots had picked Miss Margaret up at the Ms. Prudence MacDonald Memorial School of Nursing, of which Miss Margaret was head nurse. He had a large bottle of bubbly in a cooler in the back of the limousine, and they had killed most of it during the eight-block drive through heavy noontime New Orleans traffic to Brennan's.

Once inside Brennan's, they had stopped by the bar for a Sazerac cocktail, "to cut the dust of the trail" as Colonel Beaucoupmots had put it, and since the first Sazerac was so good, they had another.

They were next shown to one of the better tables in the patio where Colonel Beaucoupmots had suggested a "li'l ol' martine-er-ooney" to sharpen their appetites. After two of these, they turned their attention to the menu, and while they were waiting for their order to be served, they had a little sip from a bottle of Chablis sent to the table by the proprietor, ostensibly as a simple gesture of courtesy, but actually at the somewhat pointed suggestion, over the telephone that morning, of Colonel Beaucoupmots.

They finished the bottle of Chablis over the first course (Gumbo Creole a la Brennan's) and washed their mouths out with a split of champagne before the entree, a small *steak an poivre.* A second split of champagne was necessary to neutralize the taste of the pepper, and as they were finishing that, Colonel Beaucoupmots had reason to believe that Cupid, the God of Love, was smiling favorably upon him.

A very large Texan staggered over to the table, announced that he was touring their little town, that while Texas had many natural treasures of its own, he wanted to be the first to admit that there was nothing within its borders to compare at all with the beauty of the lady, and that he would be highly honored if he could be permitted to buy them a little drink. Getting rid of the Texan had been a little difficult, but Beaucoupmots thought the difficulty had been worthwhile, for Miss Margaret had downed two

Margaritas (the drink had seemed appropriate under the circumstances) before Tex had staggered off again.

Luncheon had concluded with a very good brandy, served in snifters, and just as Beauregard Beaucoupmots was framing The Question again in his mind, Miss Margaret had glanced at her watch and announced she had no idea where all the time had gone, but that she had to run. She had, she said, to get back to the God-Is-Love-In-All-Forms Christian Church, Inc., to check on last-minute details for the ceremony which would mark her departure for Paris.

Beauregard Beaucoupmots, ever the gentleman, rose to his feet. And then, suddenly stricken by a strange numbness in his lower extremities, sank slowly to the floor and under the table.

Suspended between two of Brennan's largest waiters, Colonel Beaucoupmots was escorted out of the restaurant and inserted into his limousine. Just as Miss Margaret herself was about to step into the limousine, the quaint old-world charm of Rue Royale was shattered by a loud blast on an air horn, and a masculine voice which boomed, " 'Allo, Hot Lips.' "

Mother Emeritus Wilson stopped and faced the noise.

She waved, smiling, at a canary-yellow bus of the type used by the Greyhound Bus Company, but in this case, obviously a private bus. On its glistening stainless-steel sides was painted, "BAYOU PERDU COUNCIL, K OF C."

The bus stopped, blocking traffic completely. The door whooshed open and a short and stocky man wearing what appeared to be the uniform of an Admiral of the French Navy during the Franco-Prussian War got off. His left hand stabilized a lethal-appearing sword in a sheath, and his right hand clutched a quart bottle of Old White Stagg Kentucky Bourbon.

"Ol' Beaucoupmots," he said, peering into the limousine, "he pass out again, no? Not to worry, *mon chere*, you ride out to the airport with Horsey de la Chevaux." He extended the bottle of Old White Stagg to Miss Margaret. She glanced around quickly, put the bottle to her lips, and took a little snort.

“Thank you very much, Horsey,” Miss Margaret, a/k/a Mother Emeritus Wilson, said. “But I think I had better drop the Colonel by his office first. I think he needs a little nap. Do you suppose someone could help me?”

Jean-Pierre de la Chevaux, chairman of the board of the Chevaux Petroleum Corporation, soon to be invested as a Chevalier de la Legion d’Honneur by the government of a grateful France, turned, faced the bus, put his fingers in his mouth, and blew. The result was a piercing whistle. Instantly, obviously ready to do battle, two enormous men, attired in similar uniforms, rushed off the bus.

“Louis,” Horsey de la Chevaux announced, “Ol’ Beaucoupmots pass out again. You and Francois help Hot Lips carry him, den you come out to the airport with her, okay?”

“For Hot Lips,” Louis de St. Andre said, bowing low, “any*ting.*”

The two men crowded into the limousine. Louis de St. Andre moved his sword out of the way, and Mother Emeritus Wilson sat on his lap. The limousine stopped in front of the main entrance to the New Orleans *Picaroon-Statesman.* The canary-yellow bus moved past it, sounding a farewell blast with the eight chrome-plated air horns mounted on its roof. The tune they played was “Onward, Christian Soldiers!”

Mother Emeritus Wilson got out of the limousine and stood on the sidewalk in front of the *Picaroon-Statesman* building as Louis de St. Andre and Francois Mulligan dragged Colonel-Beaucoupmots out and into a reasonably erect position.

The movement brought the Colonel out of a deep slumber. He stared at Mother Emeritus Wilson, apparently having some trouble in focusing his eyes and his thoughts.

“Now, Miss Margaret,” he said, rather thickly, “as I was about to say …”

“I’m going to say good-bye to you here, Beauregard,” Miss Margaret said, leaning forward to kiss him on the forehead. “I’ll send you a picture postcard of the Eiffel Tower. And be a good boy while I’m gone.”

The Colonel was transferred into the custody of two of his employees, the doorman and a floor waxer who had happened to be by at just that moment. The Colonel, sagging between them, watched as Frangois Mulligan and Louis de St. Andre got into his limousine with Miss Margaret and drove off.

Tears ran down his cheeks. He allowed himself to be carried into the building. His eye fell upon a third employee, one Ace Travers, of the editorial department.

“Ace!” the Colonel cried.

“Yes, sir, Colonel?”

“Ace, my boy, your commanding officer needs you!” Colonel Beauregard Beaucoupmots said. “I have been stricken at this critical moment with a recurrence of a condition which dates back to my active duty days. You must step forward and fill in the break in the ranks.”

“Exactly what do you have in mind, Colonel?” Ace asked, with deep suspicion.

“I cannot allow Miss Margaret to go off by herself to Paris, France,” the Colonel said. “There’s no telling what would happen to her.”

“That’s true, Colonel,” Ace said.

“Rush to the airport, my boy, and go with her! Don’t let her out of your sight!” He found his wallet and took a thick wad of bills from it and thrust them at Ace. Ace just looked at him.

“Protect my fragile flower, Ace,” the Colonel pleaded. “Keep her pure and sweet. I’m counting on you.”

“I’ll have to tell my wife,” Ace said. He had been recently married to the former Ms. Prudence MacDonald, a staff newsperson of the *Picaroon-Statesman.*

“There’s no time for that!” the Colonel cried. “Send her a telegram from Paris.”

Ace hesitated. On one hand, he knew that his wife would be furious if he went off all by himself to Paris, France. On the other hand, he had always dreamed of going to Paris, France, especially on the expense

account. He told himself that it wasn't as if he had suddenly decided to go to Paris, France, by himself. He had been ordered. It was his job. He rushed out of the *Picaroon-Statesman* Building, flagged a cab, jumped in the back seat, and cried, "Paris, France, and hurry!"

The departure ceremonies at New Orleans International were very much like those seen at other airports as Air Force One made its sweep around the country picking up those to be decorated. The French Consul and the local politicians took advantage of the situation to say a few words about Franco-American friendship. There was music, provided in this case by the Tulane University Marching Band and the Papa Joe Original Dixieland Band, who played, respectively, "The Star-Spangled Banner" and "The Marseillaise." The male, *a capella* choir of the God-Is-Love-In-All-Forms Christian Church, Inc., attired in their azure-blue choral robes, sang "The Last Time I Saw Paris," and "Auld Lang Syne."

The Archbishop of New Orleans was on hand, and made a brief speech in which he rather pointedly reminded Mr. Jean-Pierre de la Chevaux that he was carrying to Paris the honor of New Orleans. The Bayou Perdu Council, K of C, of course, in full-dress uniform, were on hand, and formed an arch of honor with their dress swords, under which Mr. de la Chevaux and Mother Emeritus Wilson marched to Air Force One.

As soon as the door on Air Force One closed, and its engines started, and as the huge glistening plane moved to the end of the runway, the Bayou Perdu Council, K of C, did a neat right-face and marched across the tarmac and up the stairway to another huge, glistening plane, identical to Air Force One except for the lettering on the fuselage, which read, "CHEVAUX PETROLEUM CORPORATION."

"New Orleans Departure Control," the pilot of Air Force One said to his microphone. "This is Air Force One. Request permission to take off for a direct flight to Paris."

Before the New Orleans Departure Control operator could reply, another voice came over the radio. "New Orleans Departure Control, this is Chevaux Petroleum Number Three. Make that two for Paris."

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Chapter Nine

The embassy of the United States of America in Paris is, with one's back to the River Seine, in the upper left-hand corner of the Place de la Concorde. The Place de la Concorde, located at the foot of the Champs Elysées, is the place where Professor Guillotine's ingenious machine was once installed, giving birth to the expression, "Heads will roll!"

Immediately to the right of the U.S. Embassy is the Hotel Crillon, the bar of which (with time out for the German occupation of Paris during World War Two) has received for three generations a substantial portion of its business from junior officers of the embassy next door. It is the "next door" as in the phrase, "I'm sorry, sir, but Third Assistant Undersecretary Quattlebaum seems to have stepped next door for a bite to eat." The Crillon bar serves free peanuts.

There is a rather nice, even elegant bar (euphemistically referred to as a "canteen") in the embassy itself, at which tax-free potables are dispensed to members of the foreign service and their guests. The State Department recognizes that it is quite enough to ask a young man from, say, Keokuk, Iowa, or a young woman from the Bronx, to spend three years far from home, enduring the horrors of French plumbing and doing without situation television comedy. To suggest that he or she (or they together) actually mingle with the foreigners and drink the native wine would be a call to service above and beyond the call of duty, and probably border on un-American behavior.

It is true, however, that the "canteen" does serve a certain public relations function. Recognizing each and every one of them to be sterling fellows and girls, the embassy extends "canteen" privileges to what used to be called the press and is now called the media. (When the embassy started calling the foreign correspondents the "media," this caused some confusion at the French Foreign Ministry on the Quai d'Orsay. When the French wanted to know what the media was, they naturally turned to an English dictionary, which told them that "media" was the plural of "medium." "Medium" was defined, first, as a "middle quality"; then as the middle term of a syllogism; and finally as someone who can communicate with the spirits of the dead departed. The obvious conclusion to be drawn was that the American diplomats were doing their tippling with a group of mediocre,

if philosophical, communicators with ghosts. The French Foreign Minister was not surprised. It explained much about American foreign policy.)

Having the media doing their boozing, so to speak, in house, had several advantages, among them the opportunity to suggest that a certain embassy activity, such as the arrival of Air Force One, and its cargo of deserving citizens, would be of interest to the folks back home, and to suggest that going out to Orly Field to record the arrival for posterity might be a good idea.

There was some resistance to covering the story, based on the un-Godly (9:15 A.M.) hour at which those to be decorated were going to arrive, but this was outweighed by the information that Congressperson Hortense V. Clumpp was aboard. She was always good copy. Representatives of the three television networks, the two wire services, and the four newspapers which maintained staffs in Paris made reservations on the press bus which would leave the embassy building at eight fifteen.

His Excellency the Ambassador would be on hand, of course, as would the French Foreign Minister, and enough members of their respective staffs to make an impressive showing. There would be a mounted platoon from the Garde Républicaine, those splendidly uniformed troops who are on hand to lend a touch of class to any official French gathering; representatives of the American Chamber of Commerce in Paris; a color guard from Paris Post No. 1, the American Legion. The presence of cameramen and reporters for French television was assured. *L'Organisation de Radio-Television Diffusion Frangaise* is a government agency. They go where told, when told, and ask no awkward questions.

The Cultural Attaché of the U.S Embassy, working with his counterpart in the French Foreign Ministry, had prepared a rather detailed schedule for the week the group would be in Paris, starting with "Arrival Ceremonies" and going through six closely typed pages to "Departure Ceremonies." In between were such things as Touring the Louvre; Dinner at Maxim's; Touring Versailles; Official Luncheon with the Foreign Minister; Performance of *Lakmé* at the Paris Opera; Official Dinner with the U.S. Ambassador; and scattered here and there, "Free Time." The actual awarding of the medals would take place before the Arc de Triomphe at

three in the afternoon of the last day, following which those to be decorated would go immediately to the airport for the flight home.

The Red Carpet was really being unrolled. Those to be decorated would return home with nothing but the fondest memories of France. None of *their* Congressmen would ever bring up the vulgar question of repayment of the French debt.

The best-laid plans of diplomats, however, like those of ordinary mortals, have an unfortunate tendency to go astray. In this case, the Archbishop of New Orleans was probably to be blamed. In his farewell benediction, he implored the good Lord to "speed the flight of these Thy children." What happened was that the Air Force One and Chevaux Petroleum Number Three picked up a tail-wind at 35,000 feet over the Atlantic which carried them toward France far faster than expected.

Specifically, when the Colonel picked up his microphone to announce that Air Force One was thirty minutes out of Orly, it was five minutes past five in the morning. Air Force One touched down at Orly at 5:11 A.M., followed at 5:12 by Cheavux Petroleum Number Three.

Instead of being greeted by the Garde Républicaine and assorted dignitaries, with bands playing and flags flying, what they got was eight grumpy gendarmes summoned moments before from sound slumber.

It was decided in a telephone call between Undersecretary Copperthwaite and a sleepy counterpart of the Quai d'Orsay that while the problem was regrettable, it was not unsolvable. The aircraft would be taxied to a remote spot on the airfield, and wait there until nine five, at which point they would be taxied back across the field to arrive officially.

Once the plane, with Chevaux Number Three tagging dutifully along behind it, was in position, Undersecretary of State Copperthwaite went back to bed. By doing so, he could now in honesty let it be known that he had slept in the Presidential bed more than once, and that was too much of an opportunity to let pass.

On Chevaux Number Three at about the same time that Copperthwaite was laying his head to rest, Francois Mulligan stirred from his uneasy sleep, looked out the window, and nudged his seatmate, Louis de St. Andre, awake. "Hey, Louis," he asked. "What's that flashing neon sign say?"

Louis looked out the window. “It say *‘Biere et Vin,’*” he announced. “Those French don’t know how to spell ‘beer.’ “

“What you say we go try some?” Frangois Mulligan said. They were thirsty. Only after they were airborne had they learned that the Archbishop’s infallible intelligence system had foiled them again. The only intoxicants aboard Chevaux Petroleum Number Three had been one half-bottle of wine and two bottles of beer per man. Normally, Chevaux Number Three was awash in booze, a situation with which the Archbishop was familiar, and which, under the circumstances, he had felt it his duty to correct.

The Bayou Perdu Council, K of C, bore no ill-feelings toward His Eminence for their enforced sobriety. The Archbishop, it was generally agreed, was a good man who meant well. And in this instance he had succeeded. He had kept the Bayou Perdu Council, K of C, to a man, sober over a distance of 4,000 miles. This was obviously a record which would stand for some time, the previous record being a well-remembered disaster which had seen the Council’s red snapper boat, the *Marie-Antoinette,* sail almost ten miles into the Gulf of Mexico without the standard ration of two cases of beer per man aboard.

But 4,000 miles of parched sobriety was certainly enough to satisfy anybody, even an Irish Archbishop. There was such a thing as too much of a good thing.

Investigation of the aircraft revealed that the pilot, co-pilot, flight engineer, and navigator had left the aircraft, leaving in charge the chief steward and his two assistants. (It was impossible, for some reason, to retain female stewardii in the employ of Chevaux Petroleum’s aviation department, despite the high wages paid.)

When the chief steward saw Francois Mulligan heading up the aisle to the stairway set up to the cockpit, he put on his best smile and spoke.

“Gentlemen, I don’t believe the schedule calls for you to exit the aircraft at this time.”

“Out of my way, Mr. Fancy Pants,” Francois Mulligan said. He picked up the chief steward and stowed him in the overhead baggage rack. The two assistant stewards locked themselves in the cockpit.

Despite his momentarily embarrassing position, however, the chief steward felt just a little smug. These barbarians might get out of the aircraft onto the stairway, but getting off the stairway was going to be another matter. The pilot had arranged for a platoon of the Gendarmerie Nationale to be stationed at the foot of the stairway, telling their commander that under no circumstances were the passengers to be allowed to disembark. He had identified them as the inmates of a mental institution who were in the process of being transferred from one funny farm to another.

Francois Mulligan, adjusting his tricornered hat and his golden sword belt, stepped through the door of the aircraft onto the landing platform.

“Attention!” the commander of the Gendarmerie Nationale called. “One of the crazy Americans is about to try an escape.” He spoke, of course in French.

“Who you calling a crazy American, tomato-nose?” Francois Mulligan replied. Hearing French spoken, he had automatically replied in French, a language he had learned at his mother’s knee, as had all the other members of the Bayou Perdue Council, K of C. Moreover, it was not simply French, but Norman French, brought to the bayous of Louisiana with Evangeline centuries before and preserved relatively intact.

The commander of the Gendarmerie Nationale was himself a Norman. He looked up in astonishment at the top of the stairway. Louis de St. Andre had joined Francois Mulligan. Inbred into all French is an appreciation of uniforms. And never before had the commander of the Gendarmerie Nationale seen more splendiferous uniforms (except of course, those of the Garde Républicaine) than those which happened to be the official dress garb of the Bayou Perdu Council, K of C.

He snapped to attention, saluted, and said. “M’sieu l’Admiral, Pierre de Beaujolais, Lieutenant, Gendarmerie Nationale, at your service.”

Francois Mulligan returned the salute and marched down the stairs. “I am Francois Mulligan,” he announced. “Deputy Knight Commander of the Silver Fleece, and this is my associate, Assistant Deputy Knight Commander of the Silver Fleece, Louis de St. Andre.”

“Beaujolais, huh?” Louis de St. Andre said. “My Uncle Nick’s married to a Beaujolais.”

Lieutenant Beaujolais beamed from ear to ear. “How may I be of service, gentlemen?”

“Somebody screwed up the schedule, Lieutenant,” Louis said. “We would like to have something to eat for breakfast.”

“Maybe with a little wine,” Francois added. “At this hour, gentlemen, I regret that there is nothing open which would be suitable for distinguished personages such as your excellencies.”

“What did he say?” Francois asked Louis, this time in English.

“He said there’s no place open,” Louis replied in English.

“What about the place with the flashing neon sign?” Francois asked, pointing across the high fence to the sign.

Lieutenant Beaujolais saw where Francois Mulligan pointed.

“That is a simple place. One could find there nothing but beer and wine and cognac,” he said.

“How are you fixed for wheels, Lieutenant?” Louis de St. Andre asked. Lieutenant Beaujolais spoke to his walkie-talkie. In moments, a very large dark green vehicle, equipped with flashing lights, the European style whooop-whoooo-whooop audible warning device, and rows of doors permitting a Gendarmerie Nationale riot squad, whose vehicle it was, to emerge simultaneously from it, came roaring across the airfield, preceded and trailed by motorcycle outriders.

A captain of the Gendarmerie Nationale, billy club in hand, jumped from the vehicle.

“Mon Capitaine,” Lieutenant Beaujolais said, saluting smartly, “may I present L’Admiral de St. Andre and L’Admiral Mulligan.” The captain, after one glance at all the gold stripes on the uniform, combined a snappy military salute with a bow.

“How may the Gendarmerie Nationale be of service?” he inquired.

The Bayou Perdu Council, K of C, quickly loaded aboard the riot vehicle and, with the whoooper breaking the early morning stillness, roared off the grounds of Orly Airport toward the flashing neon sign.

The Restaurant Casanova, on Rue Pierre Charron, just off the Champs Elysees, is normally closed long before six in the morning, but this night was an exception. Two very special customers were in the house. His Royal Highness Prince Hassan ad Kayam, heir apparent to the throne of the Sheikdom of Hussid, a small kingdom on the Gulf of Bahrain, which no one had paid much attention to at all before the discovery of certain quantities of crude oil beneath its sands, had entered the place shortly after midnight with his party of thirty-two.

On his first visit, several years before, it had been tactfully pointed out to His Highness that the Casanova was regrettably forced to operate as a profit-making enterprise; that it made its profit from the sale of champagne; and that it could not operate successfully by selling orange and tomato juice, which was all the Prince and his party, devout Moslems all, had ordered.

“Not to worry,” replied His Highness, who had been educated, in England. “Just tell my men how much champagne you think we should have been drinking, and we will pay for it.”

Selling orange and tomato juice at champagne prices was even more of a profit-making undertaking than selling carbonated white *vin ordinaire* at champagne prices, and His Highness had quickly become a valued customer.

The second valued customer in the house tonight, or, more correctly, this morning, was the pride and joy of the White Russian colony in Paris, Boris Alexandrovich Korsky-Rimsakov, baritone of the Paris Opera. He had come to the Casanova directly from the Paris Opera, where he had that night sung the title role in *Boris Gudonov.*

Boris Alexandrovich Korsky-Rimsakov was a valued customer of the Casanova for several reasons. He was Russian, as were the proprietors of the Casanova. That was important, but what really endeared him to the proprietors was what, in another society, would have been called his charisma.

Boris Alexandrovich Korsky-Rimsakov stood six-feet-five-and-one-half inches tall and distributed 297 pounds evenly on his frame. He had longish, jet-black hair, a full, neatly trimmed beard, a forty-eight-inch chest,

and soft, dark eyes under extraordinarily long eyelashes. His speaking voice —he was fluent in Russian, English, French, German, Italian, and several other tongues, including a passable Yiddish—reflected his art. All of this combined, for reasons wholly unapparent to most men, to make him something of an attraction for the gentle sex.

Phrased another way, when Boris Alexandrovich Korsky-Rimsakov entered a room occupied by twenty couples, three minutes later, the men were gathered at one end of the room, by themselves, and the ladies were gathered around Boris, to coin a phrase, like moths at a candle.

When Boris was in the Casanova, simply sitting and listening to the violin music, there was sort of a hushed silence, broken only be deep feminine sighs and the sound of hotel-room keys clattering to the floor at his feet. From time to time, Boris's name had been tied to this motion picture actress, or that baroness (and once to the wife of a Greek shipping magnate), but those who knew him well felt that his well-publicized dalliances of late had been pro forma, more with an eye to maintaining the image of opera stars in general and Russian opera stars in particular, than in the hope that somewhere, among the more-than-half the population which is of the female gender, he might find someone with whom to share life's triumphs and tragedies.

(None of this should be misconstrued to imply that Boris was lately living the life of a monk. He had read in *Time* magazine that a medical practitioner in Manhattan, Kansas, T. Mullins Yancey, M.D., had announced that sexual intercourse was the most beneficial of all forms of exercise, far superior to deep-breathing, Yoga, push-ups, knee-bends, jogging, and everything else, in terms of tuning-up the body. He had suspected this all along, but was, nonetheless, delighted to have authoritative medical confirmation. He gave up handball immediately and kept himself in shape by exercising, according the Sage of Manhattan, Kansas, at least once daily. This had nothing to do with romance. He would simply examine that day's array of admirers, pick one, and beckon to her with his index finger. He offered a one-time splendid performance,
but it was understood there would be no encores.)

Boris and His Highness were old friends, mainly because His Highness truly appreciated Boris's voice, but also because Boris's female discards

were of a generally higher quality than a five-foot-even Arab, even one with an income estimated at $35,000 a day, could get on his own.

Boris, when he had come into the Casanova just before midnight, had looked troubled. He had taken a table against the wall, and eaten only a few bites (two dozen oysters, a twenty-ounce Kansas City cut steak, half a loaf of bread, and a small order of potato pancakes) instead of his usual, hearty, post-performance meal. He barely finished his second bottle of wine before ordering the waiter to take it away and bring him some brandy.

His Highness recognized the signs of unhappiness on his friend's face, and gestured with his hands to his entourage, a signal that he wished to be alone with his friend. It was a full five minutes before Boris acknowledged the presence of His Highness.

"I thought I smelled something," he said. "Didn't I tell you to leave your camel outside?"

"My friend, you are troubled," His Highness said. "What can I do?"

He was told.

"That is an interesting thought, but unfortunately physiologically impossible," His Highness said. "What is the trouble, my friend?"

"Did you hear me sing tonight?" Boris asked, staring at him balefully.

"As always. You are Chaliapin reincarnate."

"I sang like a bull being castrated without anesthesia," Boris said.

"I did detect that you were perhaps one-one-hundredth of a degree off perfection," His Highness admitted.

"And if you could tell the difference with your tin ear, you camel-driving midget, imagine how I sounded to someone familiar with great singing."

Boris downed four inches of Napoleon brandy and burped.

"Everyone has his ups and downs," His Highness said. "Perhaps, my dear friend, you need a little exercise."

"How can you say that?" Boris demanded angrily. "I told you my sister is coming. My sweet and angelic sister, who has no idea what a shamelessly

sinful life I live here, with sordid people like you."

"I look forward expectantly to meeting that great lady, His Highness said.

"Hassan, you miserable bastard," Boris said, tears running down his cheeks, "what would I do without you?" He stood up, reached across the table, and wrapped His Highness in his arms. "It's a good thing for you," he said, his voice, trembling with emotion, carrying throughout the crowded restaurant, "that I'm not queer."

His Highness signaled for the waiter to bring another bottle of brandy. When it arrived, and Boris had helped himself to another four inches, he said:

"My friend, forgive me for bringing up this delicate subject, but have you given any more thought to seeking medical advice?"

"If there is one group more grossly incompetent than French cooks," Boris said, "it is French doctors."

He didn't mean that. The truth was that the one thing in the world, aside from his sister's displeasure, which terrified Boris Alexandrovich Korsky-Rimsakov, it was practitioners of the healing arts, from druggists upward.

"There are other doctors," His Highness said. "British doctors, American doctors, Russian doctors…."

"Your Highness," Boris said. "I would be most grateful if we could find another subject for conversation."

His Highness dropped it right there. He had been a friend, a good friend, of the singer long enough to know well that when Boris Alexandrovich Korsky-Rimsakov's conversation oozed with courtesy and was free from insuits and profanity, Boris Alexandrovich Korsky-Rimsakov was about to throw the other party across the room.

And so they sat there. The haunting melody of the violins (despite the frequent clanging interruptions as hotel keys came sailing through the air) was mixed with a bottle and a half of Napoleon brandy, and the

combination almost (but not, of course, completely) put Boris back in a good mood.

He recovered sufficiently to get back a little of his appetite, and His Highness arranged for a little snack to be sent up from Maxim's, a well-known restaurant about two blocks away, when the proprietor of Casanova, nearly in tears at the shame, confessed that he had sent the chef home at half past three in the morning.

Maxim's chef was normally tucked in his little bed, too, at half past three in the morning, but His Highness's social secretary had telephoned to announce that His Highness might drop in for a bite later in the evening. Even Maxim's will stay open for the prospect of feeding an oil-sheik and his party of thirty-two.

After the Beef Wellington and a very nice cold poached salmon with a mustard mayonnaise had been washed down with a Jeroboam of Chateau Rothschild, Boris had a little more brandy to clear his mouth, and then announced that he wished to see the sun come up over Paris. "I wish to go to Montmartre," he announced, "and have the sun come up."

The cars were summoned. His Highness' bodyguards went out onto Rue Pierre Charron and waved their chrome submachine guns menacingly up and down the street. Boris Alexandrovich Korsky-Rimsakov rose from his table and marched out of the restaurant, with H.R.H. Prince Hassan ad Kayam trotting after him.

Lined up outside were six Citroen sedans and one large Cadillac limousine. As Boris approached the Cadillac, its robed and turbanned chauffeur pulled the door open for him and he ducked, to step inside. Then he stopped and pulled his head out and gestured dramatically toward the interior.

"You sand-flea-infested degenerate," he shouted at His Highness. "I told you that my sweet and angelic sister is coming, and I have put my shamelessly immoral former life behind me for all time."

His Highness peered into the limousine. "Good morning, Baroness," he said to the tall and languid blonde inside. "How enchanting you look this morning, mademoiselle," he said to the buxom redhead beside her.

“Answer me, you bearded twerp,” Boris shouted.

“Boris,” His Highness said, with all the dignity, which was considerable, at his disposal, “at some time in the life of every artist such as yourself there comes a time when he must make sacrifices for his art. You, yourself, told me you are aware that you sang badly tonight.”

“I did *not* say *‘badly,’* ” Boris said. “It is quite *impossible* for *me* to sing *badly.* Not as superbly sometimes as at others, but *never* badly.”

“You have been neglecting your exercise for a week now,” His Highness said. “Ever since you learned your beloved sister is coming to Paris.”

“That is true,” Boris admitted. He bent down and peered into the Cadillac again.

“How delightful to see you again, Boris Alexandrovich,” the Baroness said to him in Russian. The redhead simply smiled in awe. Boris stood up again.

“Perhaps you have a point,” he said to His Highness. “An artist must make sacrifices for his art,” His Highness replied.

“For that reason only,” Boris said, making the sacrifice. “You may have the redhead,” he announced as he got into the limousine. When His Highness had gotten in the car and was seated on one of the folding seats, Boris reached up and grabbed him by the shirt front. “If one word of this reaches my sister,” he said, “you will wish you had never been born.”

“Trust me,” His Highness said. When Boris let him go, he turned to the chauffeur and ordered him to drive them to the Royal Hussid Embassy.

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Chapter Ten

The Royal Hussid Embassy occupied the left wing on the fourth floor of the Hotel Continental on Rue de Castiglione, which is the street that runs from the Opera, past the Ritz Hotel on the Place Vendome, to the Tuileries Gardens. The left wing of the hotel provides a view of the Tuileries Gardens, and by opening the window and leaning out, one may view the Place de la Concorde. In other words, the Royal Hussid Embassy is a stone's throw from the embassy of the United States of America.

Forty-five minutes after the six-Citroën, one-Cadillac convoy had arrived at the Hotel Continental to deposit His Royal Highness and his guests, His Royal Highness and Boris Alexandrovich Korsky-Rimsakov emerged again onto Rue de Castiglione.

His Highness looked slightly worn. Happy, but worn. Boris simply looked happy. There was no vestige of the gloom in which he had been soaked only an hour before.

"May I infer from your smile that you and the Baroness had an interesting chat?" His Highness asked.

"She talked," Boris said. "I wonder why they feel they must always talk?"

"I've noticed that myself," His Highness said.

"But you were right, my friend, my one true friend," Boris said to him. "Exercise was precisely what I needed. I could feel my God-given powers return almost immediately." To document this, he began to sing as they approached the limousine, which was parked in the middle of Rue de Castiglione. What he chose to sing was the Mad Miller's Scene from Dargomizhsky's opera *Ruskala.*

While people singing on Rue de Castiglione in the very early hours of the morning is not unknown (indeed, two gendarmes are stationed there to discourage just such activity, which disturbs the important sleepers in the Ritz and Continental hotels), operatic aria singing is relatively rare, and opera singers with the volume of Boris Alexandrovich Korsky-Rimsakov testing his powers are even rarer.

The two gerdarmes on duty in the area came at a run from the Place Vendome, one shouting “Silence! Silence!” at the top of his lungs, and the other blowing his whistle as loudly as he could. Windows in buildings all along Rue de Castiglione were opened, and heads popped out.

The gendarmes suddenly found themselves looking down the chrome-plate muzzles of His Highness’s bodyguards’ submachine guns. They reacted to this unexpected development, and to the *Corps Diplomatique* license tag on the Cadillac with true French savoir-faire. They stopped running, shouting, and blowing the whistle, folded their arms over their chests, fixed appreciative smiles on their faces, and waited until Boris had finished, when they applauded.

Boris acknowledged the applause with a gracious bow. Then he stepped into the limousine. His Highness got in beside him.

“Where are we going?” His Highness asked. “To the airport, dear friend. Where else would I be going at this vulgar hour of the morning?”

“But your sister’s not due until nine fifteen,” His Highness said. “I had my secretary check with the American Embassy.”

“You have far more faith in my embassy than I do,” Boris said. “I could never forgive myself if my sister arrived all alone in this city of sin, and found no one to meet her and shield her from the sight and sound of all the unspeakable wickedness which goes on here.”

“Of course,” His Highness said. “I understand perfectly.”

“I place my life in your hands, Hassan ad Kayam,” Boris said solemnly, as the Cadillac raced down the Rue de Rivoli and turned up the Boulevard Saint Michel.

“I beg pardon?” His Highness said.

“Exercise, as you so wisely saw,” Boris said, “is obviously necessary for my art.”

“Quite so, Boris Alexandrovich,” His Highness said.

“On the other hand, the precise nature of the necessary exercise must be kept from my sister,” Boris said. “Do I make myself clear?”

“Perfectly clear, Boris Alexandrovich,” His Highness said. “I will make the … uh … necessary arrangements.”

“You are a prince among men,” Boris said. “It’s a pity you’re so short and fat.”

“Allah has a place for each of us in his plans,” His Highness said.

The Cadillac, with the six Citroën sedans trailing behind it, crossed over the River Seine onto the Left Bank and out toward Orly Airfield. They rode in relative silence, His Highness silent and Boris humming quietly, if with evident self-satisfaction, to himself.

And then, suddenly, Boris Alexandrovich sat up straight on the seat. He gestured out the window toward a neon sign which flashed *“Biere et Vin.”*

“Stop!” he called. “I require sustenance.”

“In a cheap little cafe like that?” His Highness asked.

“Among your several hundred other faults, Hassan, you’re an insufferable snob,” Boris said. “Stop beside that police riot van, driver.”

It was now seven forty-five in the morning. Frangois Mulligan, Louis de St. Andre, the rest of the Bayou Perdu Council, K of C, Captain Le Blanc, Lieutenant Pierre de Beaujolais, and the Orly Field riot squad, Gendarmerie Nationale, had been in the cafe for an hour and a half, long enough, in other words, for them all to be fairly well relubricated after their long trans-Atlantic drought and practically bubbling over with profound sentiments of Franco-American friendship.

When Boris Alexandrovich Korsky-Rimsakov burst through the door, they were, in fact, singing “Aupres de ma Blonde,” in French, all efforts to teach the French to sing anything at all in English having failed.

“What is that horrible noise?” Boris asked loudly, by way of greeting.

“If you don’t like the music, Fat Boy,” Francois Mulligan replied, “shove off.”

His Highness stiffened himself for a donnybrook, but none was forthcoming.

“That was English you spoke, was it not?” Boris asked.

“So what?”

“You are Americans?”

“You bet your life,” Louis de St. Andre replied. “What’s it to you?” ‘

“Bartender,” Boris said grandly, this time in French. “Set my countrymen up with whatever is their pleasure.”

“Hey, Fat Boy,” Francois Mulligan asked. “What’s with the guys in the bathrobes? You with a circus, or what?”

“Get rid of them, Hassan,” Boris ordered. “They make my friends nervous.”

Hassan gestured, and his bodyguards, with obvious reluctance, stepped outside. “My name is Hassan,” His Highness said. “And I am always honored to meet countrymen of my friend Boris.”

“With a funny foreign name like Boris, how can you be an American?” Francois Mulligan demanded suspiciously.

“Where the hell is the booze?” Boris shouted.

“He’s an American, all right,” Louis de St. Andre said, beaming approvingly.

The booze arrived. His Highness paid for it. Louis de St. Andre beamed even more approvingly. “It’s a small world, ain’t it?” he said philosophically.

Meanwhile, back at Air Force One, Undersecretary of State Copperthwaite had been given bad news and good news. The bad news was that the 707 parked beside Air Force One at a remote center of Orly Airfield had brought with it from New Orleans the entire membership of Bayou Perdu Council, K of C, of whom he had heard a great deal in the secret reports from the FBI. The good news was that the entire membership of the Bayou Perdu Council, K of C, except for Jean-Pierre de la Chevaux, who was sober, if somewhat restless, aboard Air Force One, had vanished without a trace.

The flight had been reasonably peaceful. The poker game in the Presidential cabin had lasted until the wee hours, but after it, all the participants had fallen peaceably asleep except the Irish Stew tycoon and the opera singer. They had gone to the galley, made coffee and scrambled eggs, and talked all through the night.

Congressperson Hortense V. Clumpp had passed the trip at her typewriter, writing press releases, which kept the radio operators busy, but did not cause any trouble beyond that. It had been necessary to tell her a few white lies here and there about Reverend Mother Emeritus Wilson. Undersecretary Copperthwaite had not thought it wise to tell Congressperson Clumpp exactly why Mother Wilson did not wish to confer with her about politico-religious solutions to the male chauvinist sexist conspiracy: Mother Wilson and the maniacs in the Presidential compartment were having a couple of belts for auld lang syne.

At nine five, word began to reach Undersecretary Copperthwaite over the radio that preparations for the official welcome were underway. The mounted platoon of the Garde Républicaine had arrived at the main terminal area and were preparing to mount their horses. The American Chamber of Commerce in Paris delegation had begun to arrive. The band of the 11th Divison Mechanique, French Army, was tuning up. The color guard of Paris Post Number One, the American Legion, had arrived. The press bus had left the American Embassy on time, and the cameras of *Radio-Television Diffusion Francaise* were in place. The American Ambassador had left his official residence for the official residence of the French Foreign Minister.

At the last moment, it struck Undersecretary Copperthwaite, who had an eye for detail, that one detail had been overlooked. Once the official welcoming ceremonies had been concluded, there was no provision to get Those-to-Be-Decorated from the airport to their hotels. As he frantically spoke with someone at the embassy, trying to rectify the oversight, he felt Air Force One shudder as the engines were started. He looked at his wristwatch as he bent to look out the window. It was nine-five, and right on schedule, Air Force One was taxiing across the field to arrive officially, as the schedule called for, at nine fifteen.

“Listen to me, you simpleton,” Copperthwaite, momentarily losing control of himself, screamed into the radio-telephone. “I don’t care how you do it, but you get a bus or a fleet of embassy cars out here, and you do it now, or your next foreign service assignment will be as a janitor in Moscow.”

When the pilot of Chevaux Petroleum Number Three heard over the radio that Air Force One was about to taxi across the field, he was momentarily at a loss as to what he should do. He had returned to his aircraft to find it completely deserted. The Knights of Columbus, the gendarmes he had left to keep them aboard, and the three stewards were all gone. He reached a simple conclusion. This was a Chevaux Petroleum Corporation aircraft. Mr. Chevaux was aboard Air Force One, and Air Force One was taxiing away. He signaled for the door to be closed, and reached up on his control console and pushed the red button marked “ENGINE START.”

Ahmed Ben Abdullah, senior bodyguard to His Royal Highness Prince Hassan ad Kayam, discreetly pushed open the doors to the Cafe Damon (over which hung the flashing red neon sign, *Biere et Vin)* and stepped inside.

“Your Highness,” he said in Aramaic, “forgive this unseemly intrusion.”

“Those guys ain’t from no circus,” Frangois Mulligan said. “He’s got one of them Russian submachine guns. He’s an Arab terrorist, that’s what he is!” He drew his sword.

“Francois, my good friend,” His Highness said quickly. (This wasn’t the first, nor the tenth, time this sort of misunderstanding had occurred; His Highness was more or less prepared for it.) “He is not an Arab terrorist. He’s a friend of mine.”

“Well, okay, Shorty,” Frangois said doubtfully. “If you say so.”

“What is it, Ahmed?” His Highness inquired.

“Your Highness, the aircraft are leaving,” Ahmed replied.

“Gentlemen,” His Highness translated. “Ahmed tells me that your aircraft is leaving.”

“My God!” Boris Alexandrovich Korsky-Rimsakov shouted, after stopping in the middle of a word of the fifth verse of “Roll Me Over in the Clover, Yankee Soldier.” “It’s nine-oh-five. My darling sister is arriving right *now!”*

Ahmed Ben Abdullah, who understood English, although he didn’t, speak it too well, said, “Highness, did not your large friend say that his honorable sister was coming aboard the aircraft marked Air Force One?”

“Yes, why?” His Highness replied.

“That is one of the aircraft that is leaving,” Ahmed explained.

“Stop it!” His Highness ordered. Ahmed dashed out the door, shouted in Aramaic to the others, and ran toward the airfield.

Boris rose to his feet, weaved slightly, and fell down, a rather bemused look on his face. Two of the members of the Bayou Perdu Council, K of C, lifted him to his feet, with some effort, and he sagged between them.

“It’s all right, Big Boy,” one of them said. “You’re with friends.”

Louis de St. Andre spoke with Lieutenant Beaujolais of the Gendarmerie Nationale, who went out to the riot squad bus and spoke with his headquarters on the radio.

“The aircraft have moved to the main terminal,” he said. “Is there something wrong?”

“You bet your life there is, Pierre,” Louis said. (He and Lieutenant Beaujolais had been on a first-name basis for more than an hour although Lieutenant Beaujolais sometimes slipped and called Louis Monsieur 1’Admiral even though he had been expressly asked not to.) “The main reason we’re in Paris is to form an arch of honor with our swords, when our Supreme Commander of the Golden Fleece, Jean-Pierre de la Chevaux, gets off Air Force One.”

“I want my baby sister,” Boris said. “She needs me!” Tears ran down his cheeks.

“Lieutenant Beaujolais,” His Highness said, producing his Moroccan leather and gold diplomatic passport. “I am Prince Hassan ad Kayam, Ambassador of his Islamic Majesty, Sheik Hussid, to the French Republic. I

call upon you, as a representative of your government, to assist me on a matter of state importance."

Lieutenant Beaujolais drew himself erect. His orders regarding the diplomatic representatives of the oil sheikdoms had been explicit. Even if they were apprehended in the act of tearing down the Arc de Triomphe, stone by stone, they were to be treated as honored guests of the French Republic.

"The Orly Field riot squad of the Gendarmerie Nationale is at your service, Excellency," he said, and saluted.

"We must be at the airport terminal when the door to Air Force One is opened," His Highness said.

"Us, too, Pierre," Louis de St. Andre said.

Lieutenant Beaujolais found his whistle, and blew upon it. The rest of the riot squad, who were scattered around the Cafe Damon, interspersed with members of Bayou Perdu Council, K of C, looked to their leader.

"Allans, mes enfants," Lieutenant Beaujolais called. "We are called to duty!"

His Highness stepped to the bar and laid an inch-thick wad of currency on the zinc counter. "We thank you for your splendid hospitality, inn-keeper," he said.

In moments, the Cafe Damon was emptied. There was the sound of motorcycle engines being kicked into life; the whoop-whoop-whooping of the alarm system on the riot squad's bus, and of doors opening and slamming on the Citroëns and on the Cadillac. Boris Alexandrovich Korsky-Rimsakov was dragged to the open rear of the riot squad bus and propped into place.

Meanwhile, Air Force One, followed by Chevaux Petroleum Three, taxied slowly toward the terminal building.

"Orly Ground Control, this is Air Force One," the pilot said. "I don't want to sound ungrateful, but I'm afraid I'm going to run over some of your security personnel. Could you ask them to back away from the aircraft, please?"

“Air Force One,” Orly replied. “Which security personnel is that?”

“The ones disguised as Arabs.”

“Air Force One, say again, Please?”

“I said the ones disguised as Arabs. They’re running all over the taxi-strip, waving their submachine guns around.”

“Air Force One, please stand by,” Orly said, with commendable French savoir-faire. Then he reached on his control panel and pushed the EMERGENCY button. “Attention all security forces,” he said. “Unidentified personnel in Arabian costumes and armed with submachine guns have surrounded Air Force One. Take all necessary measures.”

The shortwave radio in the saddlebag of the commander of the Horse Troop of the Garde Républicaine buzzed ominously. The commander turned in his saddle, picked it out and tried to put it to his ear. With his silver-plated helmet in place this was impossible. He removed his helmet.

“Major de Plessis,” he said to the microphone. He listened, then snapped his head toward the runway. Three quarters of a mile away, he could see the huge, glistening fuselage of Air Force One lumbering majestically toward them. Less clearly, but unmistakably, he could make out the figures of men in Arabian robes gesturing menacingly at the cockpit.

He put the radio back in the saddlebag, put his helmet back on his head, fastened the chin strap, and drew his sword.

“Trumpeter,” he said, his heart filling at the very sound of the words, “sound the charge!”

“I beg your pardon, Monsieur le Major?”

“You heard me, you idiot,” Major de Plessis repeated. “Sound the charge!”

For the first time since the war of 1870, the Horse Troop of the Garde Républicaine was called to arms. The Major was aware that he had been called upon to take his place in history. Some appropriate words were in order. He thought desperately for something appropriate.

“Allans, mes enfants!” he called. “Remember Moscow!”

The riot squad's bus, meanwhile, preceded by the motorcycle outriders, and followed by the six Citroëns and the Cadillac limousine flying the flag of the Islamic Sheikdom of Hussid, had entered the airfield and chased down the runway after the two aircraft.

They passed them, intent on arriving at the terminal before they did. As they passed Ahmed Ben Abdullah and the others who had vainly tried to stop the planes, His Highness ordered the Cadillac's chauffeur to slow down. Ahmed Ben Abdullah and the others piled into the limousine, the doors slammed shut, and the Cadillac picked up speed again.

"Orly Ground Control," the pilot of Air Force One said. "I would like to report that a troop of cavalry is galloping down Taxi-way Three in the direction of this aircraft."

"Roger, Air Force One," Orly Ground Control replied.

"I say again, there is a troop of calvary galloping down the taxi-way."

"Orly Ground Control advises Air Force One that the cavalry is a Guard of Honor, who will escort you to the terminal."

"Air Force One advises Orly Ground Control that three members of the Guard of Honor just fell off their horses," the pilot said. "Correction, four members fell off."

"Roger, Air Force One. Orly Ground Control understands that four horsemen have been unseated."

The pilot laid his microphone down and turned to his co-pilot. "God, you really have to hand it to the French. They're absolutely unflappable."

With the sound of their sirens dying as they slowed, the motorcycle outriders of the Orly Field riot squad approached the official reception area, a flag-bedecked platform erected just outside the terminal building itself. The riot bus skidded to a halt, and its passengers, mingled members of the riot squad and the Bayou Perdu Council, K of C, debarked.

The Foreign Minister picked out what was to him the most splendiferously uniformed warrior in sight—Francois Mulligan—and demanded of him:

"M'sieu l'Admiral, what about the Arab terrorists?"

“They ain’t terrorists, pal,” Francois Mulligan replied in the purest accents of the Louisiana bayous, “They’re friends of the little fat fellow in the bathrobe.” He pointed to the limousine. The Foreign Minister recognized the flag flying from the fender even before His Highness emerged from the vehicle, followed by more robed men than the Foreign Minister would have thought it possible to pack in the back of even one of those buslike American limousines.

Air Force One rolled into place. Airport attendants unrolled a red carpet as other workers rolled stairs up to the open door. The Bayou Perdu Council, K of C, formed a somewhat ragged arch of honor with their swords. Two of the largest members of the Orly Field riot squad, Gendarmerie Nationale, went to the rear of their vehicle and dragged from it a huge, unconscious prisoner who bore an uncanny likeness to Boris Alexandrovich Korsky-Rimsakov, the opera singer, and, apparently at the direction of His Highness, held him erect between them at the end of the red carpet.

The door of Air Force One opened. The band of the 5th Division Mechanique played a trumpet flourish. F. Radcliffe Copperthwaite emerged from the aircraft and walked with dignity down the stairs. The French Foreign Minister met him at the foot of the stairs, shook his hand, and kissed him on both cheeks.

At the end of the red carpet, the huge prisoner suddenly woke up, shook loose of his guards, and staggered down the red carpet toward the airplane, bellowing, “What have you two pansies done with my baby sister?”

Louis de St. Andre, who as Assistant Deputy Knight Commander of the Silver Fleece had assumed command of the Honor Guard when Deputy Knight Commander of the Silver Fleece Francois Mulligan had passed out in the back of the riot squad bus, turned to determine the cause of the disturbance.

He was not disturbed to see Boris Alexandrovich Korsky-Rimsakov charge down the red carpet, send Undersecretary Copperthwaite and the French Foreign Minister flying, and lurch up the stairway to Air Force One. What first chilled his heart and then sent blood coursing through it was the

sight of the Horse Platoon of the Garde Républicaine galloping back up the runway, swords draw.

“About face!” St. Andre called. “Prepare to do battle! Remember that his Eminence the Archbishop reminded us that the honor of New Orleans is on our shoulders!”

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Chapter Eleven

The American Hospital in Paris has over the years become accustomed to treating visiting Americans for all sorts of indispositions, from glorious hangovers to pregnancies, but never before had it been called upon to render emergency aid to thirty-six ornately uniformed fellow countrymen suffering from a wide array of saber slashes, horse bites, and ordinary run-of-the-mill bloody noses and black eyes at once.

The two emergency treatment rooms were jammed to capacity, and the overflow filled up the reception room and the two obstetrical delivery rooms, which fortuitously were not at the time in use.

Preceded by a black Citroën sedan, a Cadillac limousine flying the flag of the Islamic Kingdom of Hussid screeched to a halt at the emergency exit. The doors to the Citroen opened simultaneously, and four robed and turbanned Arabs jumped out, rushed to the limousine, and with great effort tugged and pulled an inert form from its back seat. With one Arab attached to each arm and leg, Boris Alexandrovich Korsky-Rimsakov was carried into the American Hospital.

H.R.H. Prince Hassan got out of the front seat of the limousine, followed by Benjamin Franklin Pierce, M.D., F.A.C.S. They followed the inert opera singer into the hospital.

The chief of staff of the American Hospital, a distinguished-appearing healer in his middle fifties, a stethoscope hanging around his neck, but wearing a business suit rather than hospital whites, motioned for the Arabs to deposit their burden on one of the leather couches in the waiting room. He applied his stethoscope to Boris's chest, and then, as doctors seem to do, looked up as he listened. His eyes fell upon Benjamin Franklin Pierce, M.D., F.A.C.S.

"Damnit, Hawkeye!" he exploded. "Can't you see I have enough on my hands without you dragging in some drunken giant!"

"Stick that thing on his gut, George," Hawkeye replied. "And see if you can hear if anything's broke or leaking."

The chief of staff did as he was told.

“What happened to him?” he asked.

“He was rammed by a Congressman,” Hawkeye said, immediately correcting himself. “By a Congresswoman.”

“He looks just like Boris Alexandrovich Korsky-Rimsakov, the opera singer.”

“Correct,” Hawkeye said. “You have just won the cement bicycle. Would you care to try for the all-expense-paid trip to Beaver Falls, New York?”

“I asked you, Hawkeye, what happened to him?”

“Would you believe it if I told you he was running down the aisle of Air Force One looking for his baby sister when he was assaulted by a lady Congressman, who rammed him in the gut with her head?”

“No,” the doctor said simply. He listened again, and then probed Boris’s abdomen with his fingers. “He seems all right, Hawkeye. Was he involved in whatever it was happened at Orly Field?”

“He was on the fringes of it,” Hawkeye said.

“I don’t suppose you care to tell me what you were doing on Air Force One with a world-famous opera singer, Hawkeye?”

“Actually, with two world-famous opera singers,” Hawkeye said. “I was flown here in the President’s plane because the French are going to give me a medal.”

The doctor raised his eyebrows, but decided that silence was the path of wisdom. “There is nothing wrong with the giant that a night’s sleep, eight quarts of black coffee, and a cold shower won’t fix,” he said.

“My diagnosis exactly,” Hawkeye said. “Drunk as a lord.”

“If they haven’t gotten around yet to taking your license away, how about helping me stitch some of these other people shut?” the chief of staff said.

“What about Boris Alexandrovich?” H.R.H. Prince Hassan asked.

“Oh, excuse me,” Hawkeye said. “George, say hello to His Highness, Prince Hassan. Hassan, say hello to Dr. Kramer.”

“I am honored, sir,” Prince Hassan said, shaking Dr. Kramer’s hand. “I gather you gentlemen know each other?”

“Intimately,” Hawkeye said. “We shared a cadaver in Anatomy Two in medical school.”

“What about Boris Alexandrovich?” Prince Hassan asked again.

“Is there someplace you can take him … to his apartment maybe? … where he can sleep it off?” Hawkeye said. “I’ll look in on him when I’m through here.”

“If I take him to his apartment,” Hassan said, “or to my place, his sister will find out that he has been … drinking. It is very important to him that she not know about that.”

“Okay,” Hawkeye said. “No sense getting Kris upset. Find out where they’ve put me up, and take him there.”

The door to the emergency entrance swung open again and Reverend Mother Emeritus Wilson walked in. She had taken off the purple and gold vestments she had put on for the official welcoming ceremony and was now attired in a pale yellow dress, the hem of which was six inches above her knee, and the neckline of which was twelve inches below her chin.

“I had trouble getting a cab,” she said. “Is he all right? Kris is worried sick about him.”

“Madame,” Dr. Kramer said, puffing out like a pouter pigeon. “I am Dr. George Kramer, the chief of staff here. Is there any way, any way at all, that I might be of some small service?”

“Watch out, Hot Lips,” Hawkeye said. “The nurses in University Hospital didn’t call him ‘Nimble-fingers Kramer’ for his suturing skill.”

“How do you do, Doctor?” Hot Lips said icily. “I am Reverend Mother Emeritus Wilson, R.N.”

“I was afraid it would turn out to be something like that,” Dr. Kramer said.

“Hot Lips, why don’t you go with Hassan? He’s going to take Boris to my room. You keep Kris happy. Okay?”

“Okay,” she said. “If you’re sure I can’t be of help here?”

“Go with Hassan,” Hawkeye said. Hassan signaled, and the Arabs hauled Boris back out to the limousine. Hawkeye turned to Dr. Kramer, and draped an arm around his shoulder. “Amazing things have happened in medicine since you had to leave the country, George,” he said. “Have you heard anything about your pardon?”

“Oh, goddamn you, Hawkeye!” Kramer said. “I spend ten years over here, building up a reputation as a responsible physician, and I’m going to lose it in fifteen minutes because of you.”

They entered what was normally the delivery room. François Mulligan, missing two teeth, his right arm battered and bloody, his left hand still clutching his ceremonial saber, sat up on the table.

“Hi ya, Hawkeye,” he said. “How’d we do?”

“You may have started World War Three,” Hawkeye said. “But the final score was Knights of Columbus 46, Garde Républicaine 16, and Congresswoman Clumpp, 1.”

“These maniacs know you,” Dr. Kramer said. “That figures.”

“One more impolite word, George Kramer, and I will let everybody know that the first time you wielded a scalpel, you stabbed yourself with it, and then fainted at the sight of your own blood.”

“Just sew these maniacs up and get them and you out of my hospital, Hawkeye,” Dr. Kramer said, “or I will see that when you finally get home, you will be followed by a steady stream of heavily perfumed letters professing undying love from Mademoiselle Fifi d’Orsay.”

“I don’t know a Mademoiselle Fifi d’Orsay,” Hawkeye said.

“I know that, and you know that, but do you think your wife will believe it?” Dr. Kramer replied.

“Francois,” Hawkeye said approvingly, “say hello to the only doctor in the world with a dirtier sense of humor than my own.”

“How are you, Doc?” François Mulligan said dutifully. “Any friend of Hawkeye’s is a friend of mine.”

“With your permission,” Kramer said “I’ll have that carved on my tombstone. Do you remember how to suture a simple saber slash like this, Hawkeye? Or should I send in one of our ward boys to show you how?”

A nurse came in then and announced a problem. Etienne Schultz, of the Knights of Columbus, was posing a rather unusual medical problem. He had been skewered in the right buttocks with a lance. He had been brought to the hospital with the lance in place. There was a serious disagreement between the two attending physicians. One doctor, a psychiatrist until pressed into emergency service, advocated pulling the lance point out the way it had come in. The other attending physician, normally a radiologist, based on his extensive experience with fish hooks, felt that it should be pushed all the way through.

“Zey have lost zair tempairs,” the French nurse reported. “Zey are calling each other quacks. What is a quack, Doctor Kramair?”

“You’ve certainly come to the right man for an explanation, Nurse,” Hawkeye said. “Dr. Kramer was widely known as the Great American Quack himself.”

“I’ll get you for that, Hawkeye,” Kramer said. “I don’t know how, but I’ll get you.” He left the delivery room. Hawkeye turned to François Mulligan.

“Now, Francois,” he said. “What makes you think you’re pregnant?”

Three hours later, in Suite 319 of the Hotel Continental, 3, Rue de Castiglione, Jean-Pierre de la Chevaux, chairman of the board of the Chevaux Petroleum Corporation, leaned on the tiled wall of the bathroom and read aloud to Dr. Benjamin Franklin Pierce, F.A.C.S., from the noon edition of *Le Figaro*, Paris’ largest newspaper.

“It say,” Horsey said, translating the story into English, “that Boris Alexandrovich Korsky-Rimsakov, well-known opera singer, was … how you say? … *overcome* wit’ emotion at the sight of his sister.”

Hawkeye snickered. “That’s one way to put it, I suppose,” he said. He took the flexible shower, a spray nozzle on a flexible rubber hose connected to the bathtub’s faucets, in his hand, pressed the trigger, and squirted it, in a swinging up-and-down motion, over the occupant of the bathtub.

“I feel as if I’m basting a whale,” Hawkeye said.

The occupant of the bathtub, feeling the cold water on his skin, groaned.

“It sound dat way, too,” Horsey said.

“What did your guys give him to drink, anyway?” Hawkeye asked.

“They say,” Horsey said, “the cafe run out of *biere et vin* and they run out of cognac, so what they drink is white lightning.”

“Where’d they get white lightning?” Hawkeye asked. “I thought the Archbishop took all the booze off your plane?”

“Local white lightning,” Horsey said. “They call it Calvados.”

“What else does the story say?” Hawkeye asked. He gave the occupant of the bathtub another spray, which was followed by an even more agonized groaning.

“It say that Boris was treated on the spot by you and Trapper John, and then rushed off in the limousine of H.R.H… what’s ‘H.R.H.’ mean, Hawkeye?”

“His Royal Highness,” Hawkeye explained.

“H.R.H. Prince Hassan ad Kayam to an undisclosed location,” Horsey said. “That little fat guy is really a prince, huh, like in the Arabian Nights?”

“Complete to flying carpet, I would say,” Hawkeye said. “Does it say anything about that Congresswoman?”

“Just that she was on the plane,” Horsey said. He leaned over the bathtub. “He showing any signs of life?”

“He groans from time to time,” Hawkeye said. He looked at Boris Alexandrovich Korsky-Rimsakov and artfully drew a figure-eight on his abdomen and chest with the stream of water. This time the groan was both agonizing and long, rising and descending in tone, and finally culminating in an agonized plea, “Oh, God!”

“Hey, he talks English,” Horsey said.

“You weren’t there when he had his little chat with Congresswoman Clumpp, then, were you?” Hawkeye asked.

“What he say to her?”

“After he threw the Air Force guards at the Garde Républicaine,” Hawkeye explained, “and got on the plane, he sort of staggered into her in the aisle. She said, ‘Watch it, you big ox!’ and he said, ‘Listen, Lardbottom, I’m drunk, but not drunk enough to touch something like you on purpose.’ “

“Is that when she hit him?”

“She didn’t hit him,” Hawkeye said. “She lowered her head and butted him in the stomach. That’s what took him out.”

Another piteous groan came from the large white bathtub. Hawkeye and Horsey peered into it.

“My God, I *am* dead!” Boris Alexandrovich Korsky-Rimsakov said loudly, in shocked surprise. “Cut down in the prime of my life!”

“What gives you that idea?” Hawkeye inquired.

“I don’t know who you are,” Boris said. “You don’t look like a saint to me, but I *know* that Cajun maniac is dead.”

“Who you calling a Cajun maniac, you bearded ape?” Horsey replied.

“You’re Horsey Chevaux,” Boris said. “Or you *were* Horsey Chevaux. Biggest, dumbest Cajun sonofabitch in the whole Eighth United States Army.” He glowered at Hawkeye. “Saint or no saint, the next time you squirt me with that ice-water hose, I’m going to give you an enema with it!”

“He’s crazy,” Horsey said. “He’s not just drunk, he’s got the whatyoucallit, the delirium tremems.”

“You’re calling *me* crazy?” Boris Alexandrovich Korsky-Rimsakov said indignantly, as he sat up in the tub. “You’re the crazy sonofagun who led us up Heartbreak Ridge right through a mortar barrage! If the Chinks hadn’t killed you, I’d have killed you myself!”

He stood up in the bathtub and looked around. “Where the hell am I? This looks just like a bathroom in a Paris hotel.”

“What you know ‘bout Heartbreak Ridge, you hairy freak?” Horsey asked. “How come you know my name?”

“How the hell could I ever forget it?” Boris said. “I had to carry you off Heartbreak with every-other-Chinaman in the world shooting mortars at me.”

“I’ll be damned!” Horsey said. “Bob Alexander.” He went to Boris and wrapped his arms around him. “Hawkeye,” he said. “Say hello to PFC Bob Alexander, best Browning Automatic rifleman in Korea. He’s the guy what carry me off the hill.”

“Waste of damn effort, too,” Boris said. “Break my back for an hour, and when I get you to the bottom, you’re dead anyhow.”

“I’m no dead,” Horsey said. “Hawkeye save me.”

“Hawkeye? What kind of a name is that for a saint?”

“Finest kind,” Hawkeye said. “I gather that you two have the pleasure of each other’s acquaintance?”

“Until this odorous swamp rat got himself killed, and me shot full of holes, I was his BAR man,” Boris said. “I should have known that hell would be something like this. Spending eternity with Horsey Chevaux. I never believed that crap about hellfire and brimstone anyway.”

“I hate to break this sort of bad news so suddenly,” Hawkeye said. “But, Bob Alexander, or whatever your name is, the cold truth is that you are alive and well in Paris. And so is Horsey Chevaux.”

“You’re sure?” Boris asked doubtfully. “The last time I saw him, he was squirting blood all over North Korea like Old Faithful.”

“We plugged his leaks,” Hawkeye said.

“What you doing over here anyway?” Horsey asked. “Wearing a beard and making believe you’re a opera singer?”

“Making *believe?”* Boris asked, outraged. “I *am* Boris Alexandrovich Korsky-Rimsakov, the greatest living tenor.”

“And using some phony foreign name?” Horsey pursued.

“Bob Alexander was the phony name,” Boris said. “Every time a sergeant called the roll and got as far as Korsky-Rimsakov, Boris A., the whole damned military-industrial complex ground to a halt.” He turned to Hawkeye “Who the hell are you, anyway, Slim? And what gave you the right to spray me with ice water? What are you, some kind of a sex nut?”

“You don’t talk to Hawkeye that way, Alexander,” Horsey said angrily. “He’s the best damned doctor in the world.”

“Is that true?” Boris demanded.

“There are those that feel that way,” Hawkeye said. “There’s always a few soreheads and cynics, but generally …”

“Well, then,” Boris said. “Why are you standing here with your little hose in hand, trying to give me pneumonia? And what am I doing here, anyway? My God! My baby sister!”

“You mean Kris?” Hawkeye asked.

“Madame Kristina Korsky-Rimsakov to you, you sadistic quack,” Boris said.

“Kris,” Hawkeye repeated, “is having lunch with a gentleman admirer.”

“I knew it,” Boris cried and stepped out of the tub. He quickly wrapped a terry-cloth robe around himself. “I knew it. I wasn’t there to protect her, and she’s been dragged off, God knows where, by some depraved Frog. Do you know where he took her?”

“Yes, I do,” Hawkeye said. “And he’s not a depraved Frog. Radar … Robespierre … is a very respectable American businessman.”

“They’re even worse than depraved Frogs,” Boris said. He walked out of the bathroom into the sitting room of the suite and collapsed dramatically into a Louis XIV chair, which creaked ominously under the load.

“The last thing I recall clearly,” Boris said, “is meeting a group of Americans wearing Polish Navy uniforms. Or did I imagine that, too?”

“You refer, sir,” Hawkeye said, “to the Bayou Perdu Council, Knights of Columbus. An apology is in order.”

“I also,” Boris said, completely ignoring him, “seem to recall a cavalry charge. Have I been hallucinating? God knows, I have the right. I have been under a terrible burden.”

“You shut up for fifteen seconds,” Horsey said, “and we’ll tell you what happened.”

“Not unless you can talk awful quickly,” Hawkeye said.

At that moment, there came a rap at the door, immediately followed by the door’s opening. Ahmed Ben Abdullah, senior bodyguard to H.R.H. Prince Hassan, stepped inside, followed by two gentlemen in rumpled suits, one bearded, one mustachioed, and both bearing black bags of the type favored by physicians.

“Ahmed Ben Abdullah,” he said, “is delighted to see that Your Excellency is still alive.”

“No thanks to him,” Boris said, pointing at Hawkeye. “You wouldn’t believe what that quack was doing to me. Who are these funny-looking people? And what are they doing in my room? And where is Prince Hassan?”

“His Highness is occupied elsewhere. He asked me to bring these gentlemen to see Your Excellency.”

“Maestro,” the bearded man said. “Let me first say what an honor it is to be of service. I am Professor Dr. Aloysius de Montparnasse, chairman of the Faculty of Internal Medicine of the University of Paris, and this is Professor Rudolph du Valle, of my staff.”

They bowed in unison. Boris acknowledged the bows with a regal inclination of his head. “What can I do for you?” he asked.

“It is we who hope to be of service to you, Maestro,” the bearded Professor Montparnasse said. “His Royal Highness led us to believe that you were in need of medical attention.”

“Where were you when I needed you? Why weren’t you there to save me from the clutches of this idiot?” Boris asked.

The two doctors faced Hawkeye. “You are a physician, sir?”

“I am Hawkeye Pierce,” Hawkeye said, bowing as they had bowed. “Co-proprietor of the Finest Kind Fish Market and Medical Clinic of Crab Apple Cove, Maine.”

“But you *are* a *licensed* physician?” the Professor said.

“Of course, I am,” Hawkeye replied. “We’re pretty careful in Maine about who we let run our fish markets.”

“And have you treated this patient?”

“I hosed him down a little, if that’s what you mean,” Hawkeye said.

“And would you be so kind as to share your preliminary diagnosis with us, Doctor?”

“Drunk as an owl,” Hawkeye promptly replied.

“Would you have any objections, Doctor, if we examined the patient?”

“Examine away,” Hawkeye said.

“Keep your clammy paws off me, you four-eyed Pecker-chocker,” Boris said.

“Maestro,” Professor Montparnasse said, “we have only your best interests at heart.”

“If there’s one thing I loathe more than an American quack with a hose fetish,” Boris Alexandrovich Korsky-Rimsakov said, “it’s a goat-bearded Frog chancre-mechanic with my best interests at heart.”

Boris suddenly rose to his feet, extended his arms over his head, waved them menacingly, and gave a bloodcurdling yell. The two doctors fled.

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Chapter Twelve

Boris Alexandrovich Korsky-Rimsakov turned around with a self-satisfied smile on his face.

“So tell me, Horsey,” he said, in a conversational tone, “how’ve things been? How come you’re not pushing up daisies?”

“The battalion surgeon stopped most of the bleeding, and sent me to the 4077th MASH,” Horsey said. “And Hawkeye and Trapper John saved my leg … and my life.”

“I wouldn’t believe that if I heard it from anybody but you,” Boris said. “He’s really a doctor, huh? You could have fooled me.”

“I’m beginning to feel I should have left you where you fell on the airport battlefield,” Hawkeye said. “You probably won’t pay the bill on time, either.”

Boris glowered at him, then smiled. “For some strange reason, I like you. You may stay.”

“Thanks a lot,” Hawkeye said. “Since this is my room, I really don’t have any other place to go.”

The door opened again and F. Radclifie Copperthwaite entered.

“Good afternoon, gentlemen,” Undersecretary Copperthwaite said.

“Who the hell are *you?”* Boris demanded. “How *dare* you burst into *my* room?”

“I am F. Radcliffe Copperthwaite,” the Undersecretary said. “I am Undersecretary of State for Politico-Military Affairs.”

“So Senator MacCarthy was right after all,” Boris said, mimicing with his hands the typical flight of the butterfly.

“Not in this case, Boris,” Hawkeye said. “Copperthwaite has a wife and three kids,”

“I’ll be damned,” Boris said, shocked. Then, remembering: “That doesn’t explain what he’s doing in my room.”

“I have just returned from the Quai d’Orsay,” Copperthwaite announced. “We have reached a *detente.”*

“What is that supposed to mean?” Boris asked.

“Fortunately,” Copperthwaite said, “I was able to explain to the commanding general of the Garde Républicaine that when the Horse Troop of the Garde Républicaine came galloping back up the runway to the official reception area, the Honor Guard of the Bayou Perdu Council, K of C, understandably mistook their purpose.”

“I can see why they would,” Hawkeye said.

“Fortunately, no one was really seriously injured in the … *confusion,”* Copperthwaite said. “And no charges will be preferred. Indeed, the Knights of Columbus will be allowed to retain their swords. I have given my word as an officer and a gentleman that they will not draw them against the armed forces of France unless war is officially declared.”

“Well, I’m glad that’s been resolved,” Hawkeye said. “Are they still going to give us the medals? I’d really hate to have wasted the trip …”

“The awards ceremony will be held as scheduled, Doctor,” Copperthwaite said. “With an additional exchange of honors. As a token of mutual esteem, the Bayou Perdu Council, K of C, will be invested … in grades ranging, according to rank, from *Soldat* through *Chevalier* to *Officier* … in the *Grand Ordre Frangais de Charles de Gaulle,* and the commanding general and officers in the grade of major and above of the Garde Républicaine will be named honorary members of the Bayou Perdu Council, K of C.”

“Well, you certainly earned your diplomat’s pay today, didn’t you, Copperthwaite?” Hawkeye said.

“It was necessary to make certain overtures of our own,” Copperthwaite said somewhat gingerly. “A benefit performance of Delibes’ opera *Lakmé* will be held at the Paris Opera, proceeds to the Garde Républicaine scholarship fund. The role of Gerald, the British Indian Army officer, will be sung by Boris Alexandrovich Korsky-Rimsakov.”

“I would sooner be boiled in oil,” Boris Alexandrovich Korsky-Rimsakov announced. “I would even rather go back in the U.S. Army.

There is *no* way that I will sing anything for the benefit of the Garde Républicaine."

"What have you got against them?" Hawkeye said.

"You saw what happened," Boris said. "They rode me down like the Czar's cossacks, striking me with a coward's blow from the rear when I wasn't looking."

"What knocked you out was getting butted in the gut by that lady Congressman," Horsey said.

"I have no idea what you're talking about," Boris said. "What has obviously happened is that I have finally broken under the strain of my art. None of this is really happening."

"Maestro," Copperthwaite said. "I don't know what to say. Madame Kristina Korsky-Rimsakov assured us that you would be delighted to sing the role of Gerald to her Lakmé."

"You have seen my sister?" Boris asked.

"Just moments ago," Copperthwaite said.

"Now I know where I saw you before!" Boris shouted, bounding out of his chair and running to Copperthwaite. He lifted him off the floor by the front of his shirt. "You were at the airport, kissing your boyfriend! What have you done with my baby sister, you pervert?"

"That wasn't my boyfriend, that was the French Foreign Minister!" Copperthwaite protested.

"Boris Alexandrovich," a soft female voice said, "you put that nice Mr. Copperthwaite down this instant!"

Boris turned, still holding Copperthwaite a good foot off the floor. Kristina Korsky-Rimsakov had entered the sitting room.

"Baby Sister!" Boris exclaimed, dropping Copperthwaite. "Thank God, you're all right!"

"Why shouldn't I be all right? I've just had a lovely lamb stew lunch with Mr. O'Reilly." She stood on tiptoe, kissed Boris on the cheek, and then

patted his face. “You’ve been a bad boy again, haven’t you, Boris Alexandrovich?”

Boris hung his head. “I was only trying to protect you,” he said.

“I understand, dear,” Kris said. “But you got carried away again. Now you tell Mr. Copperthwaite you’re sorry you raised your voice to him, and that you’ll be happy to sing Gerald to my Lakmé.”

Boris turned to face Copperthwaite. The signs of a great internal struggle were evident on his face. His mouth opened and his lips moved long before a sound came from him. But finally, painfully, barely audibly, Boris said, “I regret having raised my voice to you, sir, and I would be honored to sing Gerald as you request.”

“I don’t understand,” Kristina said to the room in general, “why it is that so many people misunderstand Boris Alexandrovich. He really is a gentle, kind, and unassuming person.”

“A regular pussy-cat, Kris,” Hawkeye said. “*I* could see that right away.”

Boris glowered at him, but said nothing.

“That’s a *nice* way to put it,” Kris replied. “Daddy used to say he was a candy-coated cossack.” She reached up and pinched Boris’ cheek.

“Ah,” Boris said, flushing crimson with embarrassment, “knock it off, Sis, will you?”

“Dr. Pierce,” Kris began.

“Hawkeye, please, Kris,” Hawkeye interrupted.

“Dr. Hawkeye,” she compromised. “Big Brother and I are very grateful for all you did for him after he … slipped.”

“Think nothing of it,” Hawkeye said. “My pleasure.”

“And now, if you would be so kind as to find Big Brother’s clothing, I will take him off your hands,” Kris said.

“They’re in the bathroom, Boris,” Hawkeye said. Boris docilely walked into the bathroom and closed the door.

“I just had a long talk with Prince Hassan,” Kristina said. “He feels that Boris needs medical attention. Mr. O’Reilly said that you and Dr. McIntyre would be good enough to examine him.”

“Mr. O’Reilly said that, did he?” Hawkeye said.

“Big Brother is such a baby about going to the doctor,” Kris said. “I’m afraid we’re going to have trouble with him.”

“He doesn’t like doctors?” Hawkeye said. “I would never have guessed.”

“We can talk about it later,” Kris said. “But right now, Dr. McIntyre and Mr. O’Reilly and Prince Hassan and Reverend Mother Emeritus Wilson are waiting for you downstairs in the bar,” Kristina said.

“There is a silver lining in every cloud,” Hawkeye said. “You coming, Copperthwaite?”

“Perhaps later,” Copperthwaite said. “There is a classified message for me, *Eyes Only,* from the Secretary of State, at the embassy.”

“Let’s go, Horsey,” Hawkeye said. “Before Boris …”

“My clothes!” Boris’s voice trumpeted from the bathroom. “My clothes are soaking wet! Where is that aspirin-peddling maniac? I’ll tear him into small pieces!”

Hawkeye and Horsey walked quickly into the corridor, closed the door to the room quietly, and then took off at a dead run down the corridor.

“I am sorry, ladies,” the frock-coated maitre d’hôtel said, nimbly stepping into the doorway of the bar of the Hotel Continental, “but unaccompanied ladies are not permitted in the bar.”

“Out of my way,” the lady said. “I’m not an unaccompanied lady, I’m Congressperson Clumpp. And I’m not unaccompanied. Airwoman Third Class Mary-Margaret Maguire, as any fool can see, is with me.”

“That, Madame, I regret, does not alter the situation,” the maitre d’hôtel said, unmoved.

Hortense, who prided herself on avoiding confrontations if at all possible, looked beyond the maitre d’hotel into the bar. Sitting on facing

leather couches she recognized some familiar faces from Air Force One. She saw the little twerp alleged to be the Irish Stew tycoon; the Louisiana oil baron; the Army general; the two poker players who were supposed to be doctors; and the fat little Arab in full costume she remembered seeing at the airport. They had lost no time whatever, the male chauvinist sexist pigs, in equipping themselves with what could only be a Paris courtesan. There was no question whatever in Congressperson Clumpp's mind that the tall, statuesque blonde with the ample endowment, the low décolletage, the high hemline, the glass of champagne in her hand, and the dazzling smile could be anything but a Parisian courtesan of fame and legend.

"We will sit with my friends," Congressperson Clumpp said. "At that table."

"Madame," he said. "I regret…"

That was as far as he got. Enough is enough. Congressperson Hortense V. Clumpp lowered her head, took two quick steps, and the maitre d'hôtel, clutching his abdomen, went sailing.

"Gets 'em every time," Congressperson Clumpp said with satisfaction.

The grunting sound as the air was knocked out of him and the noise of the maitre d'hôtel's landing in the potted palms attracted the attention of Major General Henry Blake, M.C., U.S. Army. He turned and saw Congresswoman Clumpp and her companion marching purposefully toward them. He rose and fixed a smile on his face. He had received explicit supplementary orders from the Pentagon that he was to render all aid and assistance to the Congresswoman, who was on the Military Appropriations Committee.

"Why, Congresswoman Clumpp," Henry Blake said. "How nice to see you!"

"Congressperson, you idiot," she replied. "I've told you that before."

"We're having a little drink," Blake said. "Would you care to join us?"

"Where is that lisping weasel from the State Department?" she asked.

"I believe he's at the embassy," General Blake said. "Is there any way I can be of service?" He bowed to Airwoman Third Class Mary-Margaret

Maguire, who saluted militarily.

“I doubt it,” Congressperson Clumpp said. “You seem to be too occupied with your own, selfish, sexist interests.”

“I beg your pardon?”

“You heard me,” Hortense V. Clumpp said. “You should be ashamed of yourself, General. You should all be ashamed of yourselves. No sooner do you arrive in Paris than you start alley-catting around with the first peroxide blonde doxie off the streets who’ll have you. What if the Reverend Mother Emeritus should see you?”

“Hot Lips,” Hawkeye said. “Stand up and take a bow.”

“I am Reverend Mother Emeritus Wilson,” Hot Lips said, setting her champagne glass down on the table and tugging at the hem of her skirt. H.R.H. Prince Hassan’s eyes bugged out as Hot Lips swelled against her décolletage. “What in the world are you talking about?”

Congressperson Clumpp stared at her unbelievingly. “You’re Reverend Mother Wilson?”

“Correct,” Hot Lips said. “And I don’t know what you’ve been told, Miss Clumpp, but my friends have not been alley-catting around with any peroxide blonde.”

“I’m sure they haven’t,” Clumpp said, staggered. “There must be some mistake.”

“I think you owe us, and peroxide blonde doxies in general, an apology,” Hawkeye said.

“Madame,” H.R.H. Prince Hassan said. “These three gentlemen”—he gestured royally with his open palm at General Blake, Hawkeye, and Trapper—“are distinguished practitioners of the healing arts. At the very moment you barged up here with your gratuitous insults, they were having a professional consultation on a medical problem of international importance with Reverend Mother Emeritus Wilson.”

“About what?” Clumpp demanded suspiciously.

“I’m afraid that’s privileged information,” Hawkeye said. “I’m sure you’ll understand.”

“How can a medical problem have international importance?” Congressperson Clumpp demanded sarcastically.

“Madame, whatever involves Boris Alexandrovich Korsky-Rimsakov is a matter of international importance,” Prince Hassan said loyally.

“Blabbermouth,” Trapper said.

“Who … or what …” Hortense V. Clumpp said, “is Boris Alexandr … whateverit is you said?”

“He is the greatest living opera singer!” Prince Hassan said.

“You’ve met,” Hawkeye said.

“What do you mean we’ve met?” Hortense replied.

“You had a chance encounter in the aisle of Air Force One,” Trapper explained.

“You mean that hairy gorilla is an opera singer?” Hortense asked.

“The greatest living opera singer!” Prince Hassan repeated.

“That I’ll have to see to believe!” she said.

“That has already been arranged,” Prince Hassan said. “It would seem to be in the category of casting pearls before swine, but Boris Alexandrovich is going to sing Gerald in *Lakmé*, tomorrow evening, and tickets have been provided for all those to be decorated.”

“I didn’t say I thought all opera singers were swine,” Hortense said. “I just said I didn’t think *he* was an opera singer. He looks more like a furniture mover.”

“Only in his spare time,” Hawkeye said.

“What’s wrong with him?” Hortense asked.

“Now we’re back in the area of classified information,” Hawkeye said. “I’m sure you’ll understand.”

“I’ll find out from Copperthwaite,” Hortense said. “Come on, Mary-Margeret!” She started to walk out of the bar. Airwoman Third Class Mary-Margaret Maguire saluted General Blake snappily and then marched off, in a military fashion, in her wake.

Immediately outside the door, Congresswoman Clumpp turned to Airwoman Third Class Mary-Margaret Maguire.

“I want you to find out all you can about that ‘Medical problem of international importance,’ ” she said.

“Check,” Mary-Margaret said.

“It’s possible that I butted that bearded ape at the airport harder than I intended,” Congresswoman Clumpp said. “Not that I care about him, of course … I can’t recall, of the millions of awful men I have met, one I loathed more on sight … but my political enemies could … and would … use something like that against me. There are, believe it or not, literally millions of women who still think there’s something wrong with setting a male chauvinist sexist pig on his rear.”

“I understand,” Mary-Margaret said.

“I’m going over to the embassy to find out how that lisping weasel Copperthwaite is coming with my medal. While I’m there, I’ll see what he knows.”

“You’re going to get a medal, too?”

“The French are passing them out to all these clowns,” Congresswoman Clumpp said reasonably. “Why shouldn’t I get one?”

“Well, how about me? I’ve been in the Air Force almost a whole year, and the only medal I’ve got is for good behavior.”

“I’ll see what I can do,” Congresswoman Clumpp said doubtfully. “But for the time being, you just keep your ears open. And get out of that uniform and into civilian clothes. You stick out like a sore thumb.”

“Right,” Mary-Margaret said, and saluted.

“You don’t have to salute me, dummy,” Hortense V. Clumpp said.

“In basic training, they said all Congresspersons are to be considered VIPs,” Mary-Margaret said. “And to salute all VIPs.”

A very tall, rather aristocratic, and somewhat balding Frenchman carrying a large bouquet of roses stepped up to them and bowed.

“Pardon me, ladies,” he said, in a Charles Boyer-type accent. “Am I correct in presuming that you are American?”

“Right on, Charley,” Congressperson Clumpp said. “What’s it to you?”

“Perhaps you could tell me where I might find a countrywoman of yours? A delightful lady by the name, Hot Lips Houlihan?”

“What are you, some sort of gigolo?” Hortense demanded.

“Madame, I am Edouard Vincent, Baron d’Hautville.”

“Sorry about that,” Hortense said. “You talk like a gigolo.”

The Baron d’Hautville raised himself up to his full six-feet-five, bowed stiffly, and turned and entered the bar. He looked around for a moment, found what he was looking for and marched up to the table.

“Mademoiselle Hot Lips,” he said, bowing deeply. “I am beside myself with emotion!”

“Sir,” Hawkeye said indignantly. “You have just dipped your roses in my champagne!”

“I beg pardon!” the Baron d’Hautville said.

Normally, Hot Lips did not like being referred to as “Hot Lips” at all. It was an unfortunate souvenir of her service as chief nurse of the 4077th MASH in Korea during the unpleasantness there. But she could not recall now ever having been addressed as “Hot Lips” before with such charm and grace. She smiled shyly at the Baron and said, “I’m very sorry, but I do not seem to recall…”

“Sous-lieutenant d’Hautville,” the Baron said. “Twenty-Sixth Company of Infantry, French Army. You do not remember me?”

“I’m afraid not,” Hot Lips said, and meant it. She smiled her dazzling smile, and the Baron dipped his roses in Hawkeye’s champagne again.

“When I fell on the field of battle,” the Baron said, “I was in your tender care in the 4077th MASH.”

“Well, I was assigned to the 4077th MASH,” Hot Lips said, with obvious relief.

“I remember you,” Trapper John said. “Very well!”

“You do?”

“I always wondered what would happen to you when you went home with your wound medal and people asked about it,” Trapper said.

“And I remember you,” the Baron said. “Captain McIntyre!” They shook hands.

“And this is General Blake, who was then Colonel Blake,” Trapper said. “And Mr. O’Reilly, who was then Corporal O’Reilly, and Hawkeye, who was then … Hawkeye.” The Baron shook each of their hands.

“Why did you remember the Baron?” Hawkeye said. “I should think I would have remembered a baron. Bums we had, but barons only once in a while.”

“I didn’t even know he was a baron,” Trapper said. “I remembered his wound.”

“His wound? What about his wound?” Hawkeye asked.

“The Baron,” Henry Blake said, suddenly remembering and smiling from ear to ear, “suffered a penetrating wound of the left and right *gluteus maximus.* In short, he was shot in the buttocks!”

“Of course!” Hawkeye said. “We had to cut a hole in the cot and let it all hang out during recovery! How the hell are you, Baron?”

“I am very well, thank you, and I welcome you all to France! I knew that Mademoiselle Hot Lips was going to be here, but I had no idea that the rest of you would be.” He smiled, then handed the roses to Hot Lips. “We will have to have a party,” the Baron said. “You will all be my guests.”

“The very first time I laid eyes on this man,” Trapper said, “I could tell right off that he was my kind of people.”

“Speaking of our kind of people,” Hawkeye said, “what happened to the Bayou Perdu Council, K of C?”

“The French Ministry of Culture arranged a special trip for them,” Prince Hassan said. “A bus tour of Normandy.”

“Why Normandy?”

“The French of Louisiana trace their roots to Normandy,” Prince Hassan said. “And it’s several hundred miles from Paris.”

“When are they coming back?” Hawkeye asked.

“I understand the schedule calls for them to arrive back in Paris ten minutes before the medal ceremony,” the Prince said. “Following which, of course, they will go directly to the airport for the flight home.”

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Chapter Thirteen

At four fifteen that afternoon, a small delegation called at the apartment of Boris Alexandrovich Korsky-Rimsakov. It consisted of H.R.H. Prince Hassan, Mr. Robespierre O'Reilly, and Reverend Mother Emeritus Wilson. The delegation had been chosen with care by Baron d'Hautville's luncheon party. It had been decided that it would be best if Boris could be induced to voluntarily undergo a physical examination, if that were possible.

To get him to submit willingly to the ministrations of practitioners of the healing arts, it would be necessary first to convince him that Hawkeye and Trapper John were men cast in more or less the same mold. Horsey de la Chevaux was convinced that he could, over a quart or two of Old White Stagg Blended Kentucky Bourbon, convince him of their all-around merit.

To get Boris close to a couple of quarts of Old White Stagg would not normally pose any problem at all, but now his sister was with him, and Boris was sworn to total abstinence in her presence. The next step was obvious. It would be necessary to separate Boris and Kristina, in Boris's best interests.

Prince Hassan was named a member of the delegation because of his close friendship with Boris. Hot Lips was appointed because she was (a) a fellow female, who, if nothing else, could take Kristina to the powder room and tell her, more or less, what was going on, and (b) provide Kristina with company while Boris was off with the boys. Robespierre O'Reilly was a part of the delegation because it was deemed absolutely necessary that he read Boris's mind.

Boris's apartment was on the top floor of a building on the Avenue de la Grande Armée, which avenue is really sort of a continuation of the Champs Elysées. In other words, when you go up to the hill on the Champs Elysées to the Arc de Triomphe, circle around the Arc, you go down the hill on the other side on the Avenue de la Grande Armée.

The party traveled from the restaurant Maxim on the Champs in Prince Hassan's Cadillac, preceded by one Citroën and followed by two more. They had a little trouble gaining entrance to the apartment building. The doorman saw Hot Lips getting out of the car and barred the door.

“What is this?” Prince Hassan demanded indignantly. “Certainly, by now, you know who I am?”

“Pardon, Highness,” the doorman said. “But the Maestro … does Your Highness know that the Maestro’s sister is with him in his apartment?”

“Of course, I know.”

“Highness, the Maestro has left explicit instructions that there are to be *no* female guests of any shape or description, until further notice.”

“This lady,” His Highness said, “is not that kind of female guest.”

“I am sorry, Your Highness,” the door man said firmly, setting his jaw. There came the unmistakable sound of a submachine gun being cocked. The doorman bowed deeply. “To have misunderstood, Your Highness,” the doorman concluded, and the trio marched into the building.

Boris himself, wearing a silk dressing gown and holding a glass of milk and a cookie in his hands, opened the door. He took one look at Hot Lips. His face colored. “Oh, my God,” he bellowed. “That goddamned doorman’s drunk again! Hassan, you insensitive degenerate, get out of here and take this… this …”

“Who is it, Big Brother?” Kristina Korsky-Rimsakov asked, coming to the door. She saw Radar. “Why, Robespierre!” she said. “What a nice surprise. Come in and have a glass of milk and a cookie.”

The signal came in loud and clear. “I’ll be damned!” Boris Alexandrovich Korsky-Rimsakov was thinking. “She’s looking at this sawed-off twerp like he’s a combination of Paul Newman and Robert Redford. I’ve never seen her do that before.”

Radar flushed to the roots of his hair. Since there wasn’t much hair, the impression was that his head was glowing.

“Shame on you, Boris Alexandrovich,” Kristina said. “Your *nasty* language has made Robespierre blush.”

“Sorry about that,” Boris said.

“And Reverend Mother,” Kristina said. “It’s so nice of you to come. Boris, I don’t believe you’ve met the Reverend Mother?”

“The what?” Boris said.

“Reverend Mother,” Kristina began.

“Margaret, please,” Hot Lips said.

“Margaret, this is my brother, Boris. Boris, this is Mrs. Margaret Wilson, a friend of mine.”

“I’ve heard so much about you,” Hot Lips said, smiling at Boris. She was not immune to Boris’s charms, and had to remind herself that she was here in a role of mercy. “How are you feeling today?” she asked medically.

“And Your Highness,” Kristina said. “How nice of you to bring Margaret and Robespierre to see us.”

“My great privilege, Madame,” Hassan said, bowing deeply. “Actually, we come on a medical mission.”

“What is that supposed to mean, Hassan?” Boris said menacingly.

“Dr. Pierce …”

“Is he the maniac with the hose?” Boris demanded.

“Dr. Pierce, when he was called away unexpectedly, forgot to prescribe for you,” Hot Lips said.

“I don’t need any prescription,” Boris said. “I’m in perfect health.”

“He asked me to come by and see that you took four ounces of brandy to settle your stomach,” Hot Lips went on.

“Wasn’t that *nice* of Dr. Pierce?” Kristina said. “Boris, is there some brandy around here?”

“I don’t think so,” Boris said. “I can’t remember the last time I drank at home.” Radar got a very clear picture of a closet full of liquor bottles of all shapes and sizes. “But perhaps there might be a drop or two left over from a visit of the parish priest. He likes a little nip now and again. I’ll go see.”

“Kristina,” Radar said. “We have all been talking, and we thought it would be a good idea if Boris got to know Dr. Pierce … Hawkeye … and Dr. McIntyre … Trapper John …”

“You know you never got around to telling me how Dr. McIntyre came to be called ‘Trapper John,’ ” Kristina said. Radar flushed, or rather glowed, again.

Hot Lips, who had learned, years before, that Trapper John was known as Trapper John because he had trapped a cheerleader in the men’s John on a Pullman car of the Boston and Maine Railroad, came to his rescue.

“He spent a lot of time in the North Woods,” she said.

“I should have guessed,” Kristina said. “As you were saying, Robespierre.”

“Well, we thought that if Boris became friends with Hawkeye and Trapper John, it would be easier to get him to agree to an examination,” Radar said. “So what we thought we would do, would be leave Hot L—*Margaret,* here with you, and take him with us.”

“I think that’s a very good idea,” Kristina said. “But can I make one little suggestion?”

“Of course,” Radar said.

“Big Brother sometimes forgets himself when he’s out with just men,” she said. “He doesn’t mean any harm. People misunderstand him, that’s generally what it is. But what I was going to suggest is that Mrs. Wilson go with you all, as sort of a calm, refining influence.”

“If you think that’s best,” Hot Lips said.

“And, Robespierre, if you think they could do without your wisdom and counsel while they’re becoming friends, you could stay here with me. We could play gin rummy and have some milk and cookies.”

Boris came back, with a quart bottle of Hennessy XO brandy. “Surprise, surprise,” he said. “Look what I found in the back of a closet. I have no idea how it got there.”

“Well, be a good boy and do like the doctor says,” Kristina said.

“I really hate to break my Temperance Cadet’s oath,” Boris said. “But I realize that this is a medical emergency, and that I have no choice but to follow my doctor’s orders, no matter how personally distressing I find them.”

He poured a good six inches of brandy into a glass and downed it.

“Awful,” he said. “Just awful. The terrible price we must all pay to maintain our health.” A certain color came back into his cheeks. He looked at Hot Lips. “Reverend Mother,” he said. “As my sister will tell you, I have always had the greatest admiration for those who minister medically to their fellow men. Are you familiar with the great medical wizard of Manhattan, Kansas, Dr. T. Mullins Yancey?”

“No,” Hot Lips replied.

“Perhaps, one day, as a matter of professional interest, I might tell you about him,” Boris said. “He has some rather fascinating ideas about physical exercise which you might find interesting.”

“Well, you can talk about Dr. Yancey this afternoon, Big Brother,” Kristina said. “I have asked Mr. O’Reilly to play gin rummy with me. And I have told Dr. Pierce that because he was, so nice to you, you’re going to show him Paris and buy him supper.”

“Buy him supper?” Boris said, his inflection rising. “The … man … who … uh … got my clothes wet?”

“And the man who was so kind and thoughtful he sent Margaret up here with his prescription for your good health,” Kristina said.

“I hope to have the honor of having you all as my guests,” Prince Hassan said.

And Kris, Boris thought, *wants to be alone with this pint-sized balding don Juan? No harm, I suppose. She’d be as safe in a nunnery.*

“I resent that, I think,” Radar said.

“I beg pardon, Robespierre?” Kristina said.

“Nothing,” Radar said.

“Shall we be going?” Hot Lips asked. “Baron d’Hautville has asked us to meet him in a quaint old Paris bistro, and they’re waiting for us.”

“I think,” Boris said, “Just to be on the safe side, I’d better take a little dose of this horrible-tasting stuff before we go.”

“As a matter of fact,” Hot Lips said, “my tummy is a little queasy.”

Boris graciously handed Hot Lips the glass he had poured for himself. “Here’s health,” she said, tossing it down neat.

“I can’t understand,” Boris said, as he refilled the glass, “how it is that someone of your obviously profound medical expertise isn’t familiar with the work of Dr. T. Mullins Yancey.”

“Have a good time, dear,” Kristina said, as she held the door open for them to leave.

Boris looked down at Radar. *Just to be on the safe side,* he thought, *I should warn this little creep about getting fresh with my sister.*

“Boris, dear,” Kristina said sternly. “You just keep your thoughts to yourself.”

Radar looked at Kristina just as she looked at him. They both flushed.

“Sometimes,” Boris said, wonderment in his voice, “over the years, I have suspected that Kristina can read my mind.”

“Don’t be absurd,” Kristina said. “Nobody can read minds, can they, Robespierre?”

“Absolutely not,” Radar said firmly.

“Have a good time, dear,” Kristina said. She turned to Radar. “Do you like plain milk, Robespierre, or would you like me to put some chocolate in it?”

“Chocolate, please,” Radar said, as Kristina pushed her brother out the door and closed it.

Colonel Beauregard Beaucoupmots, Louisiana National Guard, Retired, could not, of course, deduct as business expense the cost of traveling to Paris, France, in pursuit of the Reverend Mother Emeritus Wilson. That was personal business, and the IRS does not make an exception for problems of the heart, even if such problems, as Beauregard assured his accountant, were interfering with his performance of his duties.

On the other hand, if his official journalistic duties should coincidentally take him to Paris, that would, of course, be business, and all expenses would be legitimately deductible as incurred in the practice of journalism.

The headline on the New Orleans *Picaroon-Statesman* read:

PICAROON-STATESMAN PUBLISHER PARIS BOUND:

"WILL GET THE TRUTH AND THE WHOLE TRUTH,"

SAYS COLONEL BEAUREGARD BEAUCOUPMOTS

By Ms. Prudence MacDonald-Travers

Picaroon-Statesman Newsperson

"There is something wrong in the State of Denmark," said Picaroon-Statesman *publisher Colonel Beauregard Beaucoupmots, "when the Bayou Council, K of C, whose peace-loving proclivities are known the length and breadth of Louisiana, are viciously attacked by a troop of French cavalry. I consider it my duty to the people of Louisiana to go there immediately and get to the root of the story. I say, 'Damn the cost; full speed ahead.' "*

Colonel Beaucoupmots said he had reason to believe that the press reports of Picaroon-Statesman *ace reporter and foreign correspondent (and husband of this writer) from the French capital have been censored. The distinguished journalist accompanied Louisiana industrialist Jean-Pierre de la Chevaux, Supreme Commander of the Knights of the Golden Fleece, K of C; the Bayou Perdu Council, K of C; and Reverend Mother Emeritus Margaret H. W. Wilson, R.N., to Paris, where Chevaux and Wilson were to be decorated by the French Government.*

"Word has reached me," Colonel Beaucoupmots reported, "that Congresswoman Hortense V. Clumpp (Radical-Liberal, California) was assaulted at Orly Field by a bearded French degenerate. While my political differences with the Congresswoman are well known, I, and the Picaroon-Statesman, *will rise to defend her virtue, something the State Department is apparently unable or unwilling to do. If Congresswoman Clumpp has been the victim of an attack by a sex-crazed Frenchman, God only knows what horrors New Orleans' beloved Reverend Mother Emeritus Wilson has been subjected to."*

"Repeated attempts to receive a clarification of the sometimes conflicting but always alarming reports from the Secretary of State

personally have been fruitless," Colonel Beaucoupmots said. "It is clear to me as a journalist that a cover-up is taking place. I intend to get to the bottom of the matter."

Colonel Beaucoupmots and this writer are to board a direct Paris flight at 7:15 this morning, scheduled to arrive in the French capital at 3:40 P.M. *Paris time.*

Six months before, when she was still Ms. Prudence MacDonald, president of the New Orleans Chapter for Female Equality in All Things, before, in other words, she had appended Ace Travers's name to her own, Prudence would have been amused or scornful, or both, about Colonel Beauregard Beaucoupmots's heartsick condition. But she had now come to understand that there were often rather touching armistices in the Battle of the Sexes. She felt compassion for his concern for his beloved Miss Margaret, and it had also occurred to her that Female Equality might just possibly have come to France, and that some sex-crazed Frenchwoman, reeking of exotic perfume, might at this very moment be stalking her Ace. Her marriage to Ace had taught her that despite his reputation as a two-fisted, hard-drinking journalist he was really just an innocent boy at heart, a naive lamb who needed her protection. God knows, Prudence thought, that there wasn't a jealous bone in her body. It was just that she was well aware that there are a lot of predatory women, just searching for a chance to corrupt an innocent lamb!

Since it was obviously necessary for them to preserve their strength for the ordeal they faced, rather than dissipate it putting up with the inconveniences of tourist class accommodation, Colonel Beaucoupmots and Ms. MacDonald-Travers booked Royal Ambassador Luxury Class seats on the airplane. The flight began with a champagne breakfast. The champagne gave Colonel Beaucoupmots gas, which he treated with a couple of snifters of brandy. At the Colonel's recommendation ("Put your trust in me, my dear, I am an old, well-traveled soldier!") Ms. MacDonald-Travers had the same.

They dozed until luncheon, which began with a double martini to whet the appetite. The oysters on the half shell, served with a nice little bottle of Chablis, followed by small steak, served with a nice little bottle of

Beaujolais, and following that, in the French manner, a tray of various cheeses, accompanied by a nice little bottle of Pinot Noir burgundy. To settle their stomachs, Colonel Beaucoupmots suggested another drop or two of the brandy.

They were on their third Royal Ambassador Luxury Class size snifter of the brandy when the pilot announced over the loudspeaker system that they were approaching the coast of France.

“I’ll drink to that!” Colonel Beaucoupmots said, momentarily forgetting his mission, and holding his snifter aloft to attract the stewardess’s attention.

Twenty minutes later, the pilot of the aircraft radioed ahead to Orly Field to request a wheelchair to transport one of his passengers who was, as he put it, “partially immobile.” The Colonel had been struck with another attack of numbed lower extremities while returning to his seat from the men’s John.

There was no trouble getting through Customs. The embassy, alerted to Colonel Beaucoupmots arrival, had arranged with the French Government for him to be passed right through Customs and into an official embassy car.

The young man from the embassy had learned at the last moment that all the embassy cars were otherwise occupied, and he was forced to hire for the trip to and from Orly Field a French taxicab. He was, moreover, a resourceful young man who had previously had experience with finding no official cars available for official missions. When he flagged the car, a small Peugot, he opened his attache case and took from it an adhesive-backed *Corps Diplomatique* sticker and applied it to the windshield. The taxicab was now in the service of the United States Embassy, and for all practical purposes (such as parking in a No Parking Zone) entitled to all the privileges and prerogatives of the Ambassador’s Cadillac.

Once he had explained all this to the cabdriver, the cabdriver was thrilled. The trip to the field was made in record time. Automobiles wearing CD insignia were not only not subject to such mundane regulations as speed limits and stop signs, but were allowed to sound their horns, a privilege

denied every other vehicle in Paris except those belonging to the Gendarmerie.

At the airport, the taxi screeched to a halt in an area identified by a six-language sign as a No Parking Zone. When the young man from the embassy went inside to greet Colonel Beaucoupmots with the warmest personal regards of the American Ambassador (who was, regrettably, unable because of the press of his duties to come to the airport himself), the cabdriver wound open the sunroof of his vehicle and stood on the seat to look out.

The young man from the embassy had been just a little concerned that Colonel Beaucoupmots (who was, after all, important enough to have the Secretary of State personally warn the Paris embassy that he was coming) might take umbrage at being met by a junior officer in a taxicab, rather than by the Ambassador in the ambassadorial limousine. Colonel Beaucoupmots was not offended. In fact, he seemed to be in a very good humor. As he was carried off the airplane, he reminded the crew that they were to come to see him in New Orleans any time they were in the area. His debarking from the airplane, in fact, was marred only by the actions of one of the stewardesses, who mistook his friendly, even paternal pat on her rump for a more intimate gesture and momentarily forgot her stewardesses' oath to keep smiling.

"Keep your paws to yourself, Grandpa," she said, but Beaucoupmots apparently didn't hear her.

"Miss Margaret," he cried loudly in the general direction of Paris. "Your Beauregard is here."

Neither was Colonel Beaucoupmots offended by the diminutive Peugot. He was, in fact, fascinated with the sun roof. After bowing (with some effort) Ms. MacDonald-Travers into the back seat, he got in the front, stood on the seat, pulled his homburg down on his head, and issued orders, in quite good French, to the driver.

"Stop at the first bar, Driver," he said. "It has been a long and dusty trail, and I need something to cut the dust." He then made the traditional signal of commanding officers of cavalry units (a circling motion of the hand above the head, followed by the downward movement of the arm in

the intended direction of movement) and gave the command. “Fooooooorward, hooo-oooo!”

This strange noise attracted the attention of one of the gendarmes on duty who rushed over. He saw the *Corps Diplomatique* insignia on the windshield, and then, rising out the sun roof, the distinguished man in the homburg. He saluted. Colonel Beauregard Beaucoupmots snappily returned the salute. Horn bleating, the taxi pulled into the stream of traffic and headed for Paris.

The young man from the embassy turned to Ms. Prudence MacDonald-Travers.

“Is this your first visit to Paris?” he politely inquired. There was no reply. Ms. Prudence MacDonald-Travers seemed to be resting her eyes. As the young man from the embassy watched, Prudence’s mouth suddenly sagged open and a strange, guttural, somehow horrifying noise came from her lips. It took the young man a moment to identify the noise; he was not used to hearing good-looking young women snore.

He leaned forward on the seat and told the taxi driver to take them directly to the embassy, that it would be unnecessary to stop at a bar en route. The driver nodded his head solemnly. Then a smile came on his face, exposing three missing and eleven dark brown teeth. Up ahead, a gendarme was raising his hand in the particular, peculiar way of Parisian gendarmes. It looks less like a traffic policeman’s gesture to order an approaching motorist to stop than it does like the statue in the Louvre of Julius Caesar accepting the paeans of the Romans to him as God and Emperor. With the possible exception of the wave with which an IRS examiner summons the taxpayer into his office for a review of his returns, it is easily the most arrogant gesture in the world.

The taxi driver, steering and blowing the horn with one hand, and pointing at the *Corps Diplomatique* sticker on the windshield, cackled with glee as he aimed for the gendarme. At the last moment, the gendarme jumped out of the way.

The taxi horn, bleating joyously in its newfound freedom, took the corner before the Chamber of Deputies building on two wheels and raced across the Pont Neuf into the Place de la Concorde. But then suddenly he

slammed on the brakes and the taxi skidded to a halt, so quickly that Ms. Prudence MacDonald-Travers slid off the seat onto the floor, without waking, and Colonel Beauregard Beaucoupmots, whose grip was neither firm nor too steady, tumbled forward out of the sun roof, did a perfect somersault onto the hood of the cab, and then landed on his feet in front of the grille.

French taxi drivers fear one thing, and one thing only, in the swift completion of their appointed rounds, and that is Arabic drivers of Arabic cars bearing *Corps Diplomatique* insignia. He had seen, just in time, an Arabic convoy coming at full speed down the Champs Elysées, one black Citroën, then a Cadillac limousine, then two more black Citroëns, each bearing CD insignia, and with the flag of the Islamic Kingdom of Hussid flapping from the right front fender of the Cadillac.

Standing, somewhat surprised, in front of the taxicab, Colonel Beauregard Beaucoupmots watched in fascination as the Citroën raced past him. Then he looked at the Cadillac. He had only a split second to look, of course, but that was enough.

He had found Miss Margaret. She was in the back seat of a limousine, and his worst fears were realized: she had already fallen into the hands of evil-looking foreigners. One of the two men in the back seat, pouring only God knew what kind of infernal brew into a glass, was a bearded giant, and the other was dressed up in some sort of incredible Rudolph Valentine costume.

Beauregard rushed back to the taxi.

“Follow that Cadillac!” he screamed, resuming his head-and-shoulders-out-the-sun-roof position.

The cabdriver did his best, but the sudden stop had done something to the engine. The starter ground and ground, but the engine would not start. Traffic began to back up behind it, across the Pont Neuf. Tempers rose, and finally, with splendid Gallic defiance of law and order, horns began to sound.

The convoy turned off the Place de la Concorde and into Rue de Rivoli. Tears began to run down Colonel Beauregard Beaucoupmots’s cheeks.

“I’ll save you, Miss Margaret!” Colonel Beaucoupmots said, shaking his fist in the general direction of the Elysee Palace. “If I have to tear this town apart, brick by brick!”

Hot Lips stared out the rear window of the limousine in surprise.

“Your Highness,” she said to Prince Hassan. “Did you see that acrobat do a somersault out of the taxicab?”

“Indeed I did, my dear,” Prince Hassan said. “You see that sort of thing all the time. They call it ‘street theater.’ “

“Stealing bread from the very mouths of we honest hard-working performers, that’s what it is,” Boris Alexandrovich Korsky-Rimsakov said. “Have a little more bubbly, my dear Reverend Mother.”

“He looked just like a friend of mine,” Hot Lips said, holding out her glass. “But of course, that’s impossible.”

The diplomatic convoy turned off Rue de Rivoli onto Rue de Castiglione, past Sulka’s, and the Hotel Continental, which triggered a thought in Boris’s mind.

“Hassan,” he said. “If things don’t work out the way I hope they work out with Reverend Mother here, you will keep my essential exercise in mind, won’t you?”

“I just knew that someone in your splendid physical condition must be a physical culture enthusiast,” Hot Lips said. “I try to get my exercise regularly myself,”

“Boris exercises almost religiously,” Prince Hassan said,

“And you say you’ve never heard of Dr. T. Mullins Yancey?” Boris asked.

“I’m afraid not,” Hot Lips said. “Are you a deep-breather, Mr. Korsky-Rimsakov? I’m into dynamic tension, myself.”

The limousine tilted as the convoy swerved around the Battle of Waterloo Monument in front of the Ritz Hotel in the Place Vendome, throwing Hot Lips into Boris’s arms.

“You, Reverend Mother,” he said, “may call me Boris.”

“And you may call me Margaret,” Hot Lips said.

“You can tell me, Margaret, when we’re alone, all about dynamic tension,” Boris said. “Which sounds absolutely fascinating. And I will tell you all about Dr. T. Mullins Yancey’s brilliant research and conclusions concerning meaningful exercise.”

“I’m looking forward so much to seeing a real French bistro,” Hot Lips said.

“And here we are,” Prince Hassan said, as the limousine swerved around the corner to Rue Danou and screeched to a halt. The bodyguard in the front seat jumped out and opened the door. Hassan got out, and then Hot Lips, followed by Boris. Hassan held open a strangely American-looking swinging door. Boris took Hot Lips’s arm and led her inside. There was a sign: “HARRY’S NEW YORK BAR**.”**

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Chapter Fourteen

Shortly after ten fifteen the next morning J. Robespierre O'Reilly walked down the carpeted third-floor hall of the Hotel Continental, stopped before the door to Suite 319, knocked, received no answer, knocked again, and when there was again no answer, tried the knob. The door swung open, and he stepped inside.

There were two double beds in the bedroom of Suite 319, and on each, spread-eagled on its back, making snoring noises, was a fully dressed human body. Radar walked between the beds, examined each occupant carefully, paused thoughtfully while he made up his mind, and then bent over the left bed. He pushed the occupant. There was no discernible response. He pushed a little harder, and still there was no response. Finally, he shook the occupant, and called out his name.

"Trapper!" Radar called. "Trapper John! Wake up!" John Francis McIntyre, MD., F.A.C.S., opened one eye. The eye examined with distaste the face of J. Robespierre O'Reilly, and then closed again.

"Trapper John!" Radar repeated. "It's ten fifteen in the morning!"

Now there was movement. Dr. McIntyre's left hand, which had been lying, extended, the palm of the hand down, began to move. It first folded at the elbow and then extended toward the bedside table. Moving slowly, with a suggestion of arthritic pain, the arm descended to the telephone. The fingers slowly closed, grasping the instrument. And then, suddenly, the arm moved violently. The telephone went flying through the air. Radar was in no danger. This was not the first, nor even the fiftieth time he had awakened Dr. McIntyre under similar conditions. At the first sign of movement, he had crouched between the beds, out of the line of fire.

The telephone crashed into the mirrored wardrobe, shattering the mirror. Dr. McIntyre's arm returned to its original position. In the adjacent bed, Benjamin Franklin Pierce, M.D., F.A.C.S., suddenly sat up, achieving a position of perfect erectness, his eyes open. He looked around the room. In the bed beside him, Dr. Pierce could see Dr. McIntyre, reclining, eyes closed. He could not see Radar. As suddenly as he had sat up and opened his eyes, Hawkeye closed his eyes and fell backward on the bed.

The snoring from both beds resumed.

Radar walked to the mirrored wardrobe and opened it. He selected two neckties from a hook and returned to the space between the beds. He carefully tied the neckties to each other, and then, moving with infinite tenderness, tied one end around the wrist of Dr. Pierce and the other end around the wrist of Dr. McIntyre. He then reached over and gently tugged on the neckties, which movement pulled the arms of the doctors toward the space between the beds. Then Radar walked softly to the arm chair beside the window and sat. From here on in, it was only a matter of time.

In a moment, Dr. Pierce, in his sleep, attempted to move his arm back where it had been. In doing so, he pulled Dr. McIntyre's arm farther away from his body. There was a moment's inactivity, and then Dr. McIntyre, in his sleep, returned his arm to its original position. This resulted in a larger movement than was previously necessary, and the movement, rather than a gentle pull, was more on the order of a sharp jerk. Almost instantly, Dr. Pierce responded, moving his arm back where it had been with an even sharper jerking movement. This produced an even more violent reaction from Dr. McIntyre, so violent, in fact, that it moved Dr. Pierce's entire torso, not just his arm, toward the space between the beds. And again the reaction was instantaneous. Dr. Pierce rolled on his side, away from the space between the beds, and, at the same time, threw his arm over his head. This action served to pull Dr. McIntyre nearly out of his bed, which woke him and, at the same time, the unexpected resistance to the movement of his arm woke Dr. Pierce.

"Just what the hell do you think you're doing?" they demanded angrily of each other, in perfect synchronization.

"Good morning!" Radar said cheerfully.

Hawkeye looked at him. "Where were you last night when we needed you?" he demanded.

"Kris and I went to the movies," Radar said. "And then we walked around a lot. Why did you need me?"

"How far do you think Radar would bounce if we throw him out the window?" Trapper John asked, untying his arm and advancing menacingly on Radar.

“If you did that,” Radar said reasonably, “then I would not be available to read Boris’s mind.”

“He’s got us there,” Trapper John said. “We need him.”

“What happened last night?” Radar said. “Did you get Boris to agree to an examination?”

“The last thing I remember clearly,” Hawkeye said, “was Boris and the Baron chasing Hot Lips around the observation platform of the Eiffel Tower. Until that point, Boris’s unflattering opinion of the medical profession was unshaken.”

“I told Kris that I would find out how things went,” Radar said. “Not so good, huh?”

“Not good,” Hawkeye agreed. “Heroic measures may be necessary.”

“Have you something in mind, Doctor?” Trapper asked.

“Indeed, I do, Doctor,” Hawkeye replied. “It came to me as I listened to Boris trying to talk Hot Lips into following the medical advice of T. Mullins Yancey, M.D.”

“How is the sage of Manhattan, Kansas, going to be of any use to us?”

“I don’t think, Doctor,” Hawkeye said, “that we should discuss such medical information in front of a layman, like this one.”

“If we don’t discuss it in front of him, Doctor,” Trapper replied, “he won’t read Boris’s mind for us.”

“Perhaps you have a point, Doctor,” Hawkeye said. “But we must first swear him to secrecy. I wouldn’t want this to get back to Kristina. She might misunderstand.”

“Raise your right hand, Radar,” Trapper said. “And repeat after me …”

Five doors down the third-floor corridor of the Hotel Continental, Ace Travers stirred in his sleep. He yawned magnificently, stretching his arms above his head and making an arc of his body. Then his arms moved to his sides, and he began to swing them sidewards. His left arm made it all right. His right hand encountered an obstruction. His hand withdrew, and then reversed itself. Previously, the back of his hand had been outmost. Now his

palm was. He contacted the obstruction again. His fingers closed gently, exploring. He stiffened.

There was absolutely no question about it, Ace, instantly wide awake, realized: what he was touching was another human being. More specifically, what his fingers had just gently kneaded was the naked buttocks of a female type human.

The color left his face. Moving with infinite care, he moved his right leg out from under the sheet and lowered his foot to the floor. Next, he put his right arm out of the bed, and lowered his hand to the floor, so that it supported his weight and there would be no sudden, bouncing movement when he got out of bed. He slid the rest of his body out of bed and lowered himself to the floor. He lay there, scarcely daring to breathe for a moment, every sense attuned to any sounds from the other occupant of the bed.

There came only the none-too-gentle noises of a female breathing, and the odor of an earthy perfume. So far so good. He stood up and looked down at the bed. The only thing visible in the pile of bedclothing was the buttocks he had just held in his hand. The rest of the body was concealed in the bedclothes. He glanced around the room. Fragile, frothy feminine undergarments were scattered all over. A half-slip was on the doorknob; pantyhose were draped across an arm chair, and a brassiere … God, what a brassiere! … was hung from the crystal chandelier. Ace got a glimpse of himself in the mirror on the wardrobe. He quickly dropped his hands to his groin to cover his own nakedness.

On tiptoe, he carefully circled through the room, picking up his own clothes from where he had apparently scattered them with reckless abandon when he had come here last night, so blind drunk that he couldn’t even recall meeting a woman, much less suggesting that she come to his room with him.

He had two quick mental images of his Prudence. The first showed her, in all her touching purity and innocence on the day of their marriage. He had sworn then, and meant every word of it, that he was forsaking all others for all time. And the first time he was away from her … God, what beasts we men are!

The second mental image, quite as painful as the first, was the face of sweet Prudence when angry. That image dated back to their wedding day, too, when, exercising her new prerogatives as a wife, she had glanced through his desk and come upon the little notebook in which, pre-Prudence, he had listed the females of his acquaintance, together with his rating of them, on a scale of one-to-ten. It was Prudence's position that the notebook should have been destroyed as soon as he had realized He Had Found the Woman Who Would Walk Hand-in-Hand Down Life's Path with him. She had given expression to her displeasure at the time by throwing his stereo out the window of their apartment. God, what would she do if she found out about this?

He tiptoed into the bathroom and eased the door closed. He dressed rapidly and as quietly as possible. He had to comb his hair with his fingers, as he dare not return to the bedroom, the scene of his carousal. And neither could he wash his face. The sound of the water flowing might wake her.

Flight, instant flight, was the only answer. After a moment's thought, he realized that his only hope was to leave the hotel room via the bathroom window, and make his way along the ornamental balconies which lined the hotel.

Five minutes later, he reached the window opening onto the hotel corridor and stepped inside. He had been aided in his journey by the cheers and applause of a crowd which had gathered in the Rue de Rivoli, and which had, like crowds all over the world, exhorted him to jump.

Mustering what dignity he could, Ace marched down the corridor and rang for the elevator. When the door whooshed open, he found that it was already rather full. Horsey de la Chevaux was there, and Prince Hassan, and four of the Prince's bodyguards. There were also two fifty-year-old women wearing badges identifying them as members of the *Whoopee in Paree* tour of the midwestern French Teachers' Association, who appeared to be making eyes at Hassan's bodyguards.

"My God, Ace!" Horsey said. "You see a ghost, or what?"

"Worse, much worse," Ace said. "Horsey, I'm in deep trouble."

"Perhaps I may be of some assistance," Prince Hassan said. "Any friend of my friend Horsey is a friend of mine."

“I don’t see what you could do,” Ace said as the doors closed and the elevator dropped to the lobby.

“What you need is a little belt,” Horsey said. “To get the blood flowing again. And then you tell Hassan and me what’s bugging you. Hassan’s all right, Ace. We just made a nice little deal. I’m renting him a super-tanker I don’t need at the moment.”

Horsey and Hassan supported Ace between them and led him into the bar. It took four fingers of Old White Stagg to restore the color to Ace’s cheeks, and another four inches before he could explain his problem.

“Horsey,” he said finally, blurting it out. “There’s a woman in my bed.”

“Congratulations!” Prince Hassan said.

“You don’t understand,” Horsey explained. “Ace just got married.”

“So?” Hassan replied.

“The woman in his bed is not his wife.”

“As I say, congratulations!” Hassan said approvingly.

“You don’t understand,” Horsey and Ace said, together.

“I think I do,” Hassan said. “It is something like Boris’s strange behavior, yes? At some times, it is a good thing for American men to have a woman in their bed, and at other times it is not. And this is one of the times when it is not? Is that a fair assessment of the problem?”

“I think so.”

“Your problem is solved, my friend,” Hassan said. He beckoned to one of his bodyguards and spoke rapidly to him in Arabic. The bodyguard bowed, beckoned to another bodyguard, and the two of them strode purposefully from the bar.

Hassan smiled at Ace. “You may put the problem from your mind,” he said. “It no longer exists.”

Ace reached for the glass and poured it down. “Thanks, guys,” he said, with evident emotion. “You just saved my marriage!”

The two bodyguards marched across the lobby and boarded the elevator. They rode it to the third floor, marched down the corridor to Ace's room, and burst in without knocking.

The occupant of the bed woke up suddenly and sat up, her eyes wide with shock, her hands holding the sheet modestly beneath her chin.

With the muzzle of his chrome-plated submachine gun, the taller of the two bodyguards picked up her half-slip, her brassiere, and her pantyhose, and dropped them on the bed. His meaning was obvious. He wished her to get dressed. She nodded her head in submission, and then signaled with her finger for them to turn around. Shrugging their shoulders at this absurd manifestation of maidenly modesty, the two Arabs turned around.

The lady dressed quickly and stood waiting. Finally, the bodyguards turned around again. They crossed the room to her, and each took an arm. They walked to the doorway and glanced outside to make sure the corridor was empty. Then they marched her down the corridor to the service elevator, rode down on it with her to the basement, and gestured with their submachine guns for her to get in the back of a black Citroën sedan which was parked there.

One of them got in the back with her. The engine whined and then started, and with a squeal of tires, the Citroën raced out of the basement garage, skidded onto a narrow street, and in a moment emerged on Rue de Rivoli.

The car moved past the American Embassy, past the Egyptian Obelisk, and turned up the Champs Elysées. Just past the Rond Pont, which is where the newspaper *Figaro* has its offices, it pulled suddenly to the curb.

The Arab in the back seat reached deep in his robes and came out with a thick wad of French currency. He peeled off three large-denomination bills, looked thoughtfully at the woman for a moment, and peeled off two more. He thrust them at her. She took them. He leaned across her and opened the door, and motioned for her to get out.

She looked at him incredulously, and then jumped out of the car and started running. She ran through a small park and emerged on a street. Across the street, behind a fence, she saw a familiar sight. Two United

States Marines in full dress uniform stood before the door to a large building.

She ran toward the building, then slowed as she neared it, remembering who she was.

“May I help you, ma’am?” the Marine guard said politely, and with obvious admiration for the lady’s appearance.

“Who’s in charge here?” she demanded to know.

“The United States Ambassador, ma’am,” the Marine said politely.

“I wish to see him instantly!” she said.

“I’m sorry, ma’am, but I don’t believe he’s in the building at the moment.”

At that moment, F. Radcliffe Copperthwaite came out of the building. He saw the lady, and saw that she was somewhat overwrought. Whatever else he was, Copperthwaite was the sort of gentleman who rushes to assist ladies in distress.

“Madame,” he said. “I am F. Radcliffe Copperthwaite, Undersecretary of State for Politico-Military Affairs. May I be of assistance?”

“I am Ms. Prudence MacDonald-Travers,” Prudence said. “Staff newsperson of the New Orleans *Picaroon-Statesman.”*

“Did you say the *Picaroon-Statesman,* Madame?”

“And I have just been abducted from my hotel room by armed Arab terrorists,” Prudence announced somewhat hysterically. She thrust the large-denomination French currency at Copperthwaite. “They gave me money!” she said. She was rapidly losing all control of herself. “God only knows what they’ve done to my beloved husband!”

Copperthwaite blanched. His eyes closed. He looked close to fainting.

“Your husband, Madame, would be Ace Travers?” he said finally, with an effort.

“Yes,” Prudence said. “How did you know that?”

“Madame, by a strange coincidence, I am at this moment en route to meet your employer. Colonel Beauregard Beaucoupmots *is* your employer?”

“Yes, he is. Is Ace with him?”

“I don’t think so,” Copperthwaite said. “Colonel Beaucoupmots was … uh … *detained for consultation* … uh the Gendarmerie Nationale early this morning. He … uh … somehow formed the impression that Mr. Travers was being held incommunicado by the French Minister of Information.”

‘My God, what for?”

“The Minister has assured me personally that he never heard of your husband, Madame, and I believe him. We were, as it happens, at Harvard together. You can mock the old school tie all you like, but if it weren’t for the days the Minister and I spent together at Harvard, I feel sure Colonel Beaucoupmots would be facing far more serious charges than simple drunk and disorderly.”

“There must be some mistake,” Prudence said loyally, “I know for a fact that Colonel Beaucoupmots knows how to handle his liquor.”

“Madame, there is something I should like to ask you,” Copperthwaite said. “Are you perchance acquainted with anyone named ‘Miss Margaret’?”

“Why, yes, of course, I am,” Prudence said.

“You don’t happen to know her full name, by any chance?”

“Yes, I do,” Prudence said. “She is Reverend Mother. Emeritus Margaret Houlihan Wachauf Wilson, **R.N.** What about *her?”*

“Oh, my God!” Copperthwaite said. “She’s one of mine.”

“One of your what?” Prudence demanded sharply.

“One of my persons to be decorated,” Copperthwaite said.

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“What about her?” Prudence asked again, her voice becoming a shade hysterical again.

“Colonel Beaucoupmots seems to feel that she has been abducted by Arabs,” Copperthwaite said. “He said he saw her being carried through the Place de la Concorde by an Arab giant, or an Arab *and* a giant, I’m not sure which.”

“It must be the same gang of terrorists who grabbed me,” Prudence said.

“Very possibly, Madame,” Copperthwaite said. “Well, this puts the matter in an entirely different light.” He paused thoughtfully. Then he beckoned to the Marine guard, who walked up and saluted snappily. “You know who I am?” Copperthwaite said.

“Yes, sir, Mr. Undersecretary, sir,” the guard said. “The Marine Guard has been instructed to render you every courtesy.”

“Very well,” Copperthwaite said. “There is a very good possibility that a nefarious plot is afoot.”

“Sir?” the guard said, in some confusion.

“We’re being ripped off,” Prudence translated.

“By person or persons unknown,” Copperthwaite went on.

“By some weirdos in Arab suits,” Prudence said.

“I don’t want you to let this young woman out of your sight,” Copperthwaite said.

“Yes, sir!” the Marine said. He stepped up to Prudence and took her arm.

“I am ordering Condition Red,” Copperthwaite said. “Pass the word!”

“Condition Red, sir?” the Marine guard said. “Embassy in immediate danger of ground assault?”

“Damn, I never can keep it straight,” Copperthwaite said. “I meant to say Condition Yellow.”

“Condition Yellow,” the guard said, with the unconcealable scorn of the professional warrior for the bumbling bureaucrat, “situation requiring extraordinary security measures while maintaining a low profile. Is that it, sir?”

“That’s it,” Copperthwaite said. “You will take this young woman to her hotel. You had better get some others to go with you. You will stay with her until further orders, protecting her person with whatever means are necessary.”

“Yes, sir,” the Marine said with enthusiasm. This is what he dreamed being a Marine guard in Paris would entail, not standing outside an office building telling one dumb tourist after another where to go to take a leak.

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Chapter Fifteen

Hawkeye, Trapper John, and Radar walked into the bar of the Hotel Continental as Ace put the first sociable drink of the day to his lips, the first three drinks having been categorized as medicinal and necessary to his health and well-being.

“I’m glad you’re here, Ace,” Hawkeye said, as Trapper John instructed the waiter to bring two of the same for him and Hawkeye and a Shirley Temple for Radar. “We may well need someone of your peculiar talents.”

“Anything I can do will be a privilege,” Ace said. “Horsey and His Highness just saved my marriage.”

“It was nothing, Hawkeye,” Horsey said modestly. “Just like Korea. All we had to do was get Ace’s broad out of his bunk and back to her village.”

“Has His Highness told you that despite all we gave him to drink last night, Boris is no nearer to willingly undergoing a medical examination than he ever has been?” Trapper asked.

“I was there when he proved his physical fitness by holding Baron whatsisname by his ankles over the side of the Eiffel Tower,” Ace said.

“We’re a little pressed for time,” Hawkeye explained. “The rehearsal for the opera he and Kristina are going to sing is this afternoon. The opera is tonight, right after the official dinner. In the morning, we have the official breakfast, followed by the awards ceremony, and then we go home. We have got to fit Boris’s examination in there somewhere.”

“I’m with you so far,” Ace said.

“Do you also remember Boris talking about Dr. T. Mullins Yancey’s theories of exercise?” Hawkeye asked.

“Yeah,” Ace said. “Geez, that must have made a bigger impression on me than I thought.”

“Well, what we have to do,” Hawkeye said, “is keep Boris from getting his exercise until the time is ripe.”

“I don’t follow you now,” Ace said. “How are you going to do that? Chain him to a wall someplace?”

“We’ll tell you about it on the way to Boris’s apartment,” Hawkeye said, draining his glass and standing up. “We can’t run the risk that he’ll wake up and take his exercise now, before it’s time.”

“You mean,” Ace asked, “that what we’re all going to do is try to keep Boris from his exercise?”

“Right,” Hawkeye said. “Hot Lips is going to go sightseeing with Kristina, and we’re going to be with Boris. All of us.”

“You think,” Ace said, counting with his finger, “that five of us are going to be enough to do that?”

“I don’t know,” Trapper said. “We’re just going to have to give it the old school try.”

Horsey and His Highness flipped a coin to see who would pay the bill, and then they walked out through the lobby of the hotel to His Highness’s limousine. The Cadillac was pointed toward the Tuilleries Gardens, and none of its passengers saw the battered Citroën panel truck on which was painted “HENRI NOMIER, VIANDES AT LEGUMES, CARENTAN, NORMANDY” coming from the direction of the Place Vendome.

Ace Travers, however, did see something which caused the color to leave his face again.

“My God, Hawkeye,” he said to Dr. Benjamin Franklin Pierce, M.D., “the brain will play tricks on you under stress, won’t it?”

“What do you mean?”

“I know this is impossible, but I would swear that I just saw my sweet Prudence walking up the street surrounded by four U.S. Marines in full-dress uniforms.”

“Horsey,” Dr. Pierce said, “would you pass Ace the medicine, please?”

Horsey handed a half-gallon bottle of Old White Stagg into the back seat. Ace took a large dose.

The Citroën panel truck pulled into the space just vacated by His Highness's limousine. The French, despite their motto of *"Liberte, Fraternite et Egalite"* cannot really be called egalitarians. They have, moreover, a finely honed sense of propriety. Battered and dirty panel trucks announcing that they are the possession of a food and vegetable merchant of Carentan, Normandy, are not welcome to park in front of *Premiere Classe* hotels. Indeed, there is a sign reading "PREMIERE CLASSE AUTOS SEULEMENT," which means First Class Autos Only, affixed to one of the pillars supporting the arcade in front of the hotel.

The doorman, tooting his whistle, came at a run when the panel truck stopped. The rear door of the panel truck opened, and François Mulligan and Louis de St. Andre, in somewhat mussed K of C uniforms, got stiffly out. Each clutched a raffia-wrapped two-liter (approximately half-gallon) jug close to his chest.

The doorman tooted his whistle furiously.

"If you blow that whistle at me one more time," François Mulligan said, in impeccable Norman French, "I will make you eat it."

"What do you wish here?" the doorman asked.

"We are here to join M'sieu Jean-Pierre de la Chevaux," François Mulligan said.

"M'sieu de la Chevaux," the doorman admitted reluctantly, "is a guest. Does M'sieu de la Chevaux expect you?"

"No. He expects us in the morning," Louis de St. Andre said. "But we came early."

"Hey, Louis, look!" François Mulligan said. "Hey, Mam'selle Prudence! What you do here?"

Ms. Prudence MacDonald-Travers, who had been walking with her head down, as her active imagination ran over all the horrible possibilities concerning her husband in the hands of the Arab terrorists, looked up at the sound of her name.

" François!" she called. "Louis!" She ran to them, with the Marines, momentarily taken by surprise, chasing after her. "My God, am I glad to see

you!” She threw herself into François’s arms.

“I think,” the Marine sergeant said, “we may consider these odd-looking native people as friendlies.”

“What’s with the Marines?” Louis said.

“Ace and Hot Lips have been kidnapped by Arab terrorists,” Prudence said. She was overcome with the emotion of relief at seeing friendly faces and began to cry.

“Hey, Jarhead,” François Mulligan demanded. “That right? Somebody grab Hot Lips and Ace?”

“Who you calling Jarhead, Mac?” the Marine sergeant said.

“You,” François said. “I was nursing boots like you through Paris Island when you was a sparkle in your papa’s eye.”

“You telling me you was a Marine?”

“Master Gunnery Sergeant François Mulligan, U.S. Marine Corps, Retired,” François said proudly. He pulled an identification card from his wallet, and showed it.

“Sorry, Gunny,” the Marine sergeant said, now with deep respect. “I guess I was thrown off by that Swabbie uniform you’re wearing. What can we do for you?”

“Oh, François, I’m so worried,” Prudence said. “They came into my room and took me away at gunpoint!”

“How you get loose?”

“They just gave me money and turned me loose,” Prudence said.

“That was obviously to let us know that they held the others,” the Marine sergeant said.

“You ain’t as dumb as you look,” François said. “Don’t you worry, Mam’selle Prudence, the Bayou Perdu Council, K of C, get your Ace back for you. And Hot Lips, too! Damn, Hot Lips one of the best broads I ever know!”

“And I bet you know a bunch, huh, Gunny?” the Marine sergeant asked.

“You bet your life,” Mulligan said. “What we got to have is a plan of action. But first things first.” He uncorked the raffia-wrapped bottle. “You take a li’l sip of this, Mam’selle Prudence,” he said. “It make you feel better.”

Prudence trustingly took a deep swallow. She handed the bottle back to François. Then her mouth fell open, her eyes widened, and she quivered all over.

“The Frogs call it Calvados,” François said. “It really take the hair off your chest, no?” He passed the bottle to the Marines, who each in turn took a little nip.

“Next, we got to get reinforcements,” François said.

“Where is the rest of the Council?” Prudence asked.

“That dumb diplomat Copperthwaite send us out to Normandy,” Louis de St. Andre said. “All they got out there is cows and broken-down buildings. If we want to see cows and broken-down buildings, we don’t have to leave the Bayou. So François and me decide to come back.”

François went around to the front of the truck. “Hey, Henri,” he said, taking out a roll of bills. “You think you can find that bus and the rest of the guys?”

Henri Nomier, respected food merchant of Carentan, Normandy, who had been promised a tour of the Parisian fleshpots he’d heard about all his life but had never had a chance to visit in exchange for transporting François and Louis back to Paris, was reluctant to return immediately to Normandy. More money and several pulls at François’s raffia-covered bottle, plus François’s argument that the honor of France was at stake, finally convinced him where his duty lay, however, and with a painful clash of gears and the emission of a large cloud of blue smoke, the Citroën panel truck made a U-turn on Rue de Castiglione and headed back for the provinces.

François and Louis marched into the lobby of the Hotel Continental, followed by the Marines, who formed a square, with Prudence in the center.

A command post was established in Horsey's room, and François picked up the telephone.

"Connect me with Lieutenant Pierre de Beaujolais of the Orly Field riot squad, Gendarmerie Nationale," he said.

Ms. Prudence MacDonald-Travers announced that since the first sip of the Calvados seemed to settle her stomach, she thought she probably had better have a second.

Airwoman Third Class Mary-Margaret Maguire at about this time was having a late breakfast with Congressperson Hortense V. Clumpp at an outside table at the Café de la Paix.

The Café de la Paix sits to the left (facing the building) of the Paris Opera, and on the very corner of the street sits a device, sort of a circular billboard, called a kiosk.

Congressperson Clumpp gestured toward the kiosk.

"If that ugly gorilla is sick," she demanded, "what about that?"

The kiosk was covered with billboards announcing in flaming red letters, a "*Performance pour le Charite"* of Delibes opera *Lakmé,* starring both Boris Alexandrovich Korsky-Rimsakov and Kristina Korsky-Rimsakov, that very night.

"I'm not sure if such an ugly ape is capable of such noble sentiments," Mary-Margaret said, "but there is a tradition in the theater that 'the show must go on.' "

"I'll believe that when I see it." Congressperson Clumpp said.

"You mean you're going to the *Opera?"*

"Wild horses and an army of male chauvinist pigs couldn't keep me away!" Congressperson Clumpp said.

"What did you find out about my medal?" Mary-Margaret asked.

"I couldn't lay my hands on that little weasel Copperthwaite yesterday," Congressperson Clumpp said. "So I called the Secretary of State in Washington. I told him what's been going on around here, and I told him that if he ever expects to serve anything fancier than beer and Kraft cheese

on Saltines at those soup-and-fish State Department functions, he'd better see that the Deputy Assistant Chairperson of the Foreign Relations Appropriations Committee gets a medal like everybody else."

"What did he say?"

"He just made gurgling noises," Congressperson Clumpp said. "But he got the message all right. When I called the embassy this morning, the Ambassador told me the Secretary of State is due to arrive here at six thirty tonight. He would have come quicker, but Air Force One is already here, and he had to come on El Al."

"Why El Al?"

"They give him a religious discount," Congressperson Clumpp explained.

"What did you do last night, when I was chasing all those male chauvist pigs around?" Mary-Margaret asked.

"After my nap, I went for a walk on the Champs Elysées," Congressperson Clumpp said, and she blushed. "Would you believe it, Mary-Margaret, four men tried to pick me up?"

"What did you do?" Mary-Margaret, suitably outraged, asked.

"I butted the first two," Congressperson Clumpp said. "Knocked one right into a fountain …" Her tone of voice changed. "Mary-Margaret, I wouldn't tell this to another living soul, but do you know what?"

"What?"

"I rather like it," she said, hanging her head and looking at Mary-Margaret shyly. "I realize that since I have to save the United States of America from itself, there is no room in my life for a man, on a permanent basis, I mean, but still … To tell you the truth, it was the first time a man made a pass at me since I was in junior high school."

"Who!" Mary-Margaret said.

"I couldn't help but wonder," Congressperson Clumpp said self-consciously, "what it would be like to … you know, sort of reciprocate…"

"And did you?"

“Twice,” Congressperson Clumpp said. “And they both got fresh! Right off the bat! The first one … a little twerp with a moustache … tried to get me to a hotel over the first drink.”

“Did you?”

“Of course not!” Congressperon Clumpp said. “And the second one even offered me money!”

“You don’t mean it!”

“Yes, I do.”

“What did you do?”

“I told him I was a United States Congressperson, and we don’t do that sort of thing.”

“And what did he say?”

“He really got mad,” Hortense said. “I guess I really hurt his male chauvinist pig ego. He said that if I wasn’t looking for a little romance, I had no right to be walking on the Champs Elysées at midnight.” She paused, strangely pleased at the memory. “He said I was nothing but a tease!”

“He should have known better,” Mary-Margaret said indignantly.

“Why should he have known better?” Hortense asked, with a strong hint of indignation in her voice.

“He should have been able to tell from the way you were dressed that you are far above that sort of thing!”

“Who are you to talk about clothes? If that skirt of yours was any higher, it would be a necklace.”

“I’m dressed this way to spy on the male chauvinist pigs,” Mary-Margaret said. “And you were obviously dressed to show you hate men.”

“Is that so?” Hortense V. Clumpp asked. Her voice seemed to break.

“My God!” Mary-Margaret said. “You mean it’s not on purpose?”

Congressperson Clumpp fought it as long as she could, but it was too much for her. A tear rolled down her cheek.

“Hortense, dear,” Mary-Margaret Maguire said. “I’m sorry!”

“Will you help me, Mary-Margaret?” Hortense asked.

Mary-Margaret reached over and tenderly patted her hand. “Of course I will.” She looked around the Place de 1’Opera. Her eye fell on a small shop, the windows of which were filled with what used to be called ladies’ unmentionables. “We’ll start there,” she said, standing up.

Congressperson Clumpp saw where she pointed. She seemed suddenly hesitant.

“Do … ordinary … women really wear things like that?” she asked.

“That’s the name of the game, Congressperson,” Mary-Margaret said. Congressperson Clumpp stood up, straightened her shoulders, extended her hands and arms to both sides to stop traffic, and marched across the Place de l’Opéra to the *Boutique Femme Scandaleuse.*

When the Secretary of State debarked from El Al Flight 404 (Washington-Paris-Tel Aviv) carrying a plastic container of chicken soup to provide him a little sustenance in the City of Lights, the French Foreign Minister was, of course, on hand.

The Garde Républicaine was there, too, and unless you looked closely (which, of course, the Secretary of State was too diplomatic to do) you could easily miss seeing the scars and dents in their once gleaming armor. The Orly Field riot squad, Gendarmerie Nationale, which always provided security for the arrival of VIPs, was not in evidence. Had the Secretary asked (he didn’t) where they were, the Foreign Minister was prepared to tell him they had been called away on routine maneuvers.

In point of fact, the Foreign Minister had no idea where they were. He had been told that shortly after noon, the alarm bell had gone off, and the entire force had raced off, sirens screaming, in the general direction of Paris.

The Foreign Minister, as the El Al plane taxied up to the terminal, had received a final, last-minute briefing from the deputy chief of the Deuxième Bureau, a French governmental agency which provides for the French Government all those functions provided the United States Government by

the FBI, the CIA, Common Cause, and the John Birch Society. It had not been an encouraging report.

Reverend Mother Emeritus Margaret Houlihan Wachauf Wilson and Journalist Ace Travers had not been found. Although representations had been made to all Arab governments, and those known or suspected to be sympathetic to the Arabs, nothing had been turned up. Teams of investigators from both the Gendarmerie Nationale and the Deuxième Bureau were attempting to locate H.R.H. Prince Hassan, of the Islamic Kingdom of Hussid, in whose presence the Reverend Mother was known to have been, but so far there had been no success.

The Foreign Minister waited until he and the Secretary of State were in the official ministerial Citroën before breaking the latest bad news. Undersecretary of State Copperthwaite, who had been last seen at the Detention Facility of the Gendarmerie Nationale (more popularly known by its former title, La Bastille Royale), where he had gone to clear up an unfortunate misunderstanding involving the distinguished American publisher, Colonel Beauregard Beaucoupmots, had also dropped from sight.

"Oy vay iz mir!" the Secretary said. "So where's Beaucoupmots?"

"He was last seen entering a taxicab with Undersecretary Copperthwaite," the Foreign Minister said. "At the moment, that's all we know, but we're running down several leads."

At that moment, the attention of the diplomats was diverted by the heart-chilling whooper mounted on a Gendarmerie Nationale riot bus which came racing up the Boulevard St. Michel as the ministerial Citroën went down it.

It took a corner on two wheels, skidded a little, and ran head-on into a *pissoir* (sort of an occupied kiosk) emblazoned with billboards advertising *Lakmé.*

"As you can see, Mr. Secretary," the Foreign Minister said, "we are doing everything humanly possible. The entire French Government and all the facilities of all its ministries are hard at work."

"Vunderful," the Secretary of State said. "I shouldn't vorry, right?"

"That's right," the Foreign Minister said.

“So tell me, vhy is it dat I’m vorrying?”

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Chapter Sixteen

The River Seine flows through the City of Paris, dividing it into the Left Bank and the Right Bank. It is not just an ornamental stream, but rather an integral part of the French transportation system, on which float large numbers of barges and other vessels which carry goods to and from the French capital.

It is also the support of an enterprise known as the Bateau Mouches, a collection of sort of self-propelled barges converted into floating tourist busses with restaurants, which ply the river carrying merry revelers, tourists, and people like that for a price.

It is possible to charter a Bateau Mouche in very much the same way that it is possible to charter, in the United States, a Greyhound bus. For so much an hour, or so much a kilometer, the Bateau Mouche is yours to command. *Le Bateau Mouche Engelbert Humperdinck* had been engaged shortly after noon by H.R.H. Prince Hassan for a lengthy cruise up and down the Seine.

His Highness's emissaries, who actually chartered the vessel, raised no argument whatever about the price, but insisted on certain other things. First of all, all female employees had to be set ashore for the duration of the voyage and replaced by males. There was some initial confusion about this, until it was made clear to the proprietors that neither His Highness nor his guests were *that way,* and that no-females rule was intended solely to remove all possible distractions from the concentration of Boris Alexandrovich Korsky-Rimsakov, who would be rehearsing aboard for his performance that night.

All bottled spirits were similarly to be set ashore for the uration of the voyage, and the services of the on-board restaurant would not be required. The first stop of the vessel would be at the bank beside the Tour d'Argent restaurant, which had been engaged to cater the voyage. At that time, le Baron d'Hautville would see that a sufficient supply of champagne from his Paris warehouse would also be put aboard. While the boat was tied up on the bank, a supply of Old White Stagg Kentucky Bourbon would also be taken aboard.

A round table, comfortable chairs, and poker cards and chips would be necessary for the entertainment of certain of His Highness's guests who might wish to amuse themselves that way while Boris Alexandrovich and his sister were rehearsing.

Most important, however, was the requirement that the captain of the vessel take his orders from Dr. Benjamin Franklin Pierce, and no one else. This requirement was quite simple and had to be followed to the letter. The vessel was not to touch shore, or accept or discharge any passenger on any pretense whatsoever without the specific personal approval of Dr. Pierce.

The voyage began without incident. There was a slightly nasty scene, however, when the first stop was made at the Tour d'Argent restaurant. Through an understandable oversight, His Highness's emissaries had not been informed that Mr. J. Robespierre O'Reilly had made his own plans for on-board sustenance, and a small donnybrook had occurred between employees of the Tour d'Argent restaurant, carrying aboard pressed duck, caviar, truffles, and brie and camembert cheeses, and employees of a Mere O'Reilly Ragout Americain Bistro attempting to load aboard a sufficient supply of the French version of Mother O'Reilly's Franco-American Irish Stew.

But with that issue resolved, *Le Bateau Mouche Englebert Humperdinck* let loose its lines and, belching blue diesel smoke, proceeded to glide slowly down the River Seine.

Boris Alexandrovich Korsky-Rimsakov managed to find a moment alone with His Highness before joining his sister at the piano, which had been set up on the stern of the vessel under a glass roof.

"How, you miserable worm, am I to be expected to sing without my exercise?" he asked reasonably.

"Maestro, it will all be taken care of before your performance tonight. In the meantime, under the circumstances, you will have to suffer for your art."

"I can only give so much," Boris said. "I am only human."

"You are a genius, an artist without parallel," His Highness said.

“True, but I have the same hungers, the same simple needs as lesser men,” Boris said. “You had better not fail me, Hassan!”

The final flaw in an otherwise perfect plan to keep Boris Alexandrovich Korsky-Rimsakov sober and celibate for the afternoon came to light when he went aft and announced that he was ready to begin rehearsing, and where in the name of Joseph Smith and all the Latter Day Saints was the damned piano player?

None had been taken aboard, and for a moment, until Mr. J. Robespierre O’Reilly confessed that he messed around with the piano a little, it appeared as if another stop would be necessary. But Mr. O’Reilly sat down and started to play, warming up with a few minutes of piano rag music before turning to the opera score.

From that point on, until nearly the end of the voyage at seven forty-five that evening, everything went more or less smoothly.

Dr. John Francis Xavier McIntyre did faint. This occurred when night fell and it became too dark to continue the poker game. Dr. McIntyre had just won the last pot, which put him, by an odd coincidence, three blue chips ahead. Mr. de la Chevaux was ninety-three blue chips, fourteen red chips and eleven white chips ahead, the Baron d’Hautville was ahead sixty-five blue, ten red, and forty-one white, and the loser was H.R.H. Prince Hassan. Dr. Pierce and Reverend Mother Wilson had not played. They were engaged in preparation for the post-performance activity.

Why, exactly, Dr. McIntyre fainted was the subject of some speculation. What happened was that he turned white, blinked his eyes, and passed out immediately after Prince Hassan toted up his losses:

“Ninety-three blue, fourteen red, and eleven white, Horsey,” His Highness said. “In the currency of my country, is fifty Ung, ninety-three Buggies. In your money, that comes out to fifteen thousand, four hundred and fifty dollars. I don’t have that much of your money with me. Would you take Swiss francs?”

“Why not?” Horsey had said, just before Dr. McIntyre, who had been under the impression they were simply playing to pass the time of day, passed out.

Despite the insistence at the time of the charter that the captain of the *Englebert Humperdinck* was to place himself totally and without question under the orders of Benjamin Franklin Pierce, M.D., the command the good doctor issued was actually rather simple.

"Go downstream as far as you think you should," Hawkeye ordered, "so that you can turn around and deliver us back here at seven fifteen. That will give us enough time to get Boris and Kristina to the Opera in time to put on their costumes."

When the poker table was cleared, four waiters in purple livery and a chef in chef's whites from Le Tour d'Argent set it up for supper, while two stew stirrers (the term was not translatable into French, so the American phrase had to be used) from Mere O'Reilly's Ragout Americain Bistro set up a smaller table, complete to checkered tablecloth and shamrock-shaped candle, for Mr. O'Reilly and Madame Korsky-Rimsakov.

The rehearsal had gone well, despite Boris's prediction that without exercise too much was being asked of him. He was so happy, in fact, with the way the rehearsal had gone, and with the prospect of pre-performance exercise, that he stepped to the bow of the *Englebert Humperdinck* and gave an a capella rendition of the Steersman's aria from Wagner's opera *The Flying Dutchman* to a highly appreciative audience of fishermen, lovers, tourists, and purveyors of French postcards along the banks of the river.

The singing attracted the attention of two gentlemen who had been hurrying from the Left Bank of the City of Paris to the Right Bank over one of the many bridges which cross the River Seine.

Colonel Beauregard Beaucoupmots at first looked casually over one side of the bridge, simply to identify the source of the music. He saw the boat and Boris, making heroic gestures as he sang from the bow, and then, immediately behind him, seated at a table covered with sparkling linen and gleaming silver, a liveried waiter in the act of pouring champagne into a glass held by a tall, statuesque blonde who could be no one but his beloved Miss Margaret.

He was having a little trouble focusing his eyes at the time, and had to stare a moment to make sure, but then he turned to his companion.

“Miss Margaret,” he announced, “is being held captive aboard that boat!”

“If you say so, Beauregard, old buddy,” his companion said.

Colonel Beaucoupmots dashed across the bridge to the other side, narrowly missing being run over by a large bus, and forcing a motorcyclist and his passenger to drive up on the sidewalk. He climbed up on the railing, stripping off his coat, and made a rather stylish swan dive into the river.

In a moment, his companion, who had slightly more difficulty in crossing the street, reached the side of the bridge and saw the Colonel pop to the surface and swim toward the *Englebert Humperdinck.* He, too, stripped off his coat as he climbed over the railing and then he, too, dove into the water.

Aboard the *Englebert Humperdinck,* her captain marched up to Dr. Pierce, saluted and said: “I realize that my orders are that we are to pick up no passengers, Doctor. But I must inform you that the Rules of the Sea require that we come to the assistance of those in need of help.”

“What’s the problem?” Hawkeye asked, reaching for another caviar hors d’oeuvre.

“Two men have just attempted to commit suicide by jumping into the river,” the captain said. “I have given orders that they be brought aboard.”

“Very well, Captain,” Hawkeye said, rising to the occasion. “Carry on!”

Trapper John, who had been recuperating from his fainting spell with the aid of some properly chilled Chateau d’Hautville 1907 Champagne, walked to the side of the rail and watched as seamen of the *Englebert Humperdinck* crew fished the two swimmers out of the Seine, and helped them to chairs.

“Baron,” he said to the Baron, grasping him for support. “Duty calls. Those two would-be suicides are staggering. They obviously require medical attention. Would you be good enough to escort me to them?”

The Baron, who had, for auld lang syne, been drinking Old White Stagg (Horsey had told him it was the closest thing to the home brew he had

made, and they had drunk, when patients of the 4077th MASH), wrapped his arm around Trapper. “Nothing would give me greater pleasure,” he said.

They started aft, and in their anything but direct line of movement, passed the table where Hawkeye sat with Prince Hassan and Hot Lips.

“Where do you two think you’re going?” Hawkeye asked.

“I am going to render medical assistance to someone in distress,” Trapper John announced, somewhat thickly. “If you have to know.”

“Oh, sit down,” Hot Lips said firmly and with a touch of annoyance. “Hawkeye and I will go have a look at them.”

Hawkeye rose. “Nurse,” he said formally. “A stimulant may be in order. Bring the jug.”

Baron d’Hautville and Trapper John slumped into chairs as Hawkeye and Hot Lips made their way aft. By the time they reached the two fished-out swimmers, they had been provided with blankets and a steward had brought hot coffee.

Colonel Beauregard Beaucoupmots looked up and saw Hawkeye and Hot Lips. With a magnificent display of will, he rose to his feet.

“Miss Margaret,” he announced. “Your little Beauregard has come to rescue you!”

Having said that, he collapsed slowly onto the deck.

His companion now rose to his feet.

“Hi ya, Hot Lips,” he said, staggering over to her and putting his arm around her shoulder. “Having a good time?”

“Why, yes, I am,” Hot Lips replied. “Mr. Undersecretary Copperthwaite, have you been … drinking?”

“You bet your life I have, baby,” F. Radcliffe Copperthwaite said. “But you ain’t seen nothing yet!” He reached for the bottle of medicinal brandy, but didn’t make it. And then he, too, slipped to the deck, coming to rest atop Colonel Beauregard Beaucoupmots. They began to snore.

The Captain of the *Englebert Humperdinck* walked up to Hawkeye, eyeing with visible distaste the two bodies dripping muddy and foul Seine

River water onto his pristine deck.

“They are not dead?”

“No.” Hot Lips said.

“But they are dying?” There was genuine interest in his voice.

“No,” Hawkeye said.

“Pity,” the captain said. “But not to worry about them, M’sieu le Docteur. I will have them removed by the gendarmes as soon as we dock.”

“And when will that be?” Hawkeye asked.

“We are at this moment coming into port,” the captain said.

“Well, then, Captain,” Hawkeye said, “you go steer, and we’ll take care of these two.”

The Secretary of State had refused the kind invitation of the Ambassador to be housed in the official residence, and had accepted, instead, the kind invitation of the French Foreign Minister to be the guest of the Government of France at the Hotel Ritz.

The cuisine at the Ambassador’s residence tended to reflect the Ambassador’s background and that of his wife. It ran heavily to such things as Texas chili and New England boiled dinners, and the Secretary felt that he was making enough of a sacrifice just by ruining a long-planned weekend to come here, without ruining his stomach in the bargain as well.

A delegation from the embassy and the Foreign Ministry was waiting for him at the Ritz. The news they brought was not especially encouraging. Colonel Beauregard Beaucoupmots, Reverend Mother Wilson, Ace Travers, and Undersecretary Copperthwaite were still missing, and the Secretary inferred from the entirely confident and assured attitude of the representative of the Deuxième Bureau that the French hadn’t the foggiest idea where they were.

There was some good news. The Bayou Perdu Council, K of C, were safely on ice in Normandy and would not return until the next day. A satisfactory explanation for the absence of Drs. McIntyre and Pierce, Reverend Mother Emeritus Wilson, and Undersecretary Copperthwaite had been developed. They were, it would be announced, practicing the healing

arts at the American Hospital, which noble labor had precluded their presence at the official dinner. If anyone asked what Undersecretary Copperthwaite was doing practicing the healing arts, it would be explained that he was serving as translator.

Tickets to the Charity Performance of *Lakmé* were sold out. The house would be packed. Some of this was because of the adoration in which Boris Korsky-Rimsakov was held by the opera-lovers of Paris; some was because Kristina Korsky-Rimsakov's reputation as a contralto had preceded her; and some was because the word has somehow gotten out that in Act Two, Boris would tear from his chest his uniform tunic. The rumor that he would sing bare-chested had been enough to bring French matrons from as far away as Bordeaux and Marseilles.

Extraordinary security provisions had been made for the award ceremony scheduled for the next afternoon, and the Secretary was assured by both French and American security experts that absolutely nothing untoward could possibly happen.

There were some loose ends, of course. For one thing, the Arab terrorists had not been heard from. For another, Congressperson Hortense V. Clumpp was unaccounted for. No one believed for a minute that even the most depraved and desperate terrorist group would dare lay a hand on her, so the other, less pleasant alternative had to be considered. Congressperson Clumpp was holed up in a hotel room somewhere, writing the speech she would deliver on the floor of Congress (with pre-delivery copies to *The New York Times* and the *Washington Post)* immediately after returning home. The very thought of that gave the Secretary the chills. He had, of course, arranged for the Congresswoman to be decorated (the Order of Joan of Arc, Grande Classe, for contributions to Franco-American politico-cultural affairs) but unless he could get the word to her, she would not know that, and would proceed on her current course in the belief that she was being denied a medal.

It was a time for waiting, rather than for action, so the Secretary shooed the delegates from the embassy and the Foreign Ministry out of his suite, took a shower, shaved, and dressed. He opened the bottle of Chateau d'Hautville '37 sent up by the managment, searched in vain for a champagne glass, gave up, settled for the glass from the bathroom, and

seated himself on the little balcony overlooking the Place Vendome. If nothing else, he thought, he would have twenty or thirty minutes to himself, during which he could watch all the fascinating things which happen in the Place Vendome before the limousine came to carry him to the official dinner.

He had worked his way through about half of the Chateau d'Hautville '37 when he saw a small convoy of official cars entering the Place Vendome from Rue de Castiglione. He got to his feet, thinking perhaps it was intended for him (there was a Cadillac limousine following the two black Citroens in the lead) but then saw that the flag flying from the front fender was not the Stars and Stripes.

Just past the Battle of Waterloo monument, the convoy broke into two parts. The black Citroën directly in front of the limousine and the black Citroën immediately behind it peeled off to the left, as the rest of the convoy continued in the direction of the Opera.

The two Citroëns now pulled to a stop in front of the Ritz, which is to say, immediately beneath where the Secretary stood on his balcony. The doors opened simultaneously. From each car, two robed Arabs emerged. From the front seat of the lead car a man, who looked American, got out, and from the front seat of the car in back a tall, statuesque blonde emerged. The Secretary found the blonde more interesting than the man, both because of her appearance and because she carried a bottle of Chateau d'Hautville '23 in one hand and a champagne glass in the other.

The two Arabs reached in the back of the car and with some effort dragged a body from the rear seat. It was of a slightly balding gray-haired man with cavalry moustache. He was not ill. The Secretary deduced this from the fact that he was singing. He was singing a song the Secretary had last heard when he had been a sergeant in the United States Army.

The blonde bent over him and patted him on the cheek.

"Beauregard," she said. "Here we are at the hotel."

The name rang a bell somewhere in the Secretary's memory, but it wasn't until the Arabs in the other car had pulled a similarly limp body from it (also singing, this tune, "On, Fair Harvard") that he could put it all together. He looked to see if he perchance was to find yet another of his

former students from that institution of higher learning, to whom he could offer, for auld lang syne, some succor in his hour of need.

For the first time in thirty years, the Secretary opened his mouth and spoke without having first carefully considered every possible ramification of every syllable. He said, “Copperthwaite! What the hell are you doing?”

He was separated by only ten feet from F. Radcliffe Copperthwaite. The Undersecretary looked up to see who was calling his name. He recognized the Secretary, albeit with some difficulty. He stopped singing. With some effort, he managed to move his hand over his face. As his thumb touched his nose, and the fingers of his hand wiggled in the classic gesture, Undersecretary of State F. Radcliffe Copperthwaite put his tongue between his lips and blew, rendering the Secretary the classic Bronx cheer.

By the time the Secretary had recovered, the Arabs, who had been carrying Undersecretary Copperthwaite by his armpits and feet, had carried him out of sight into the hotel. The Secretary rushed to the door of his suite and down the corridor to the elevator. And then he ran back to the suite. No matter what the emergency, he realized that the Secretary of State of the United States could not be seen barefoot in the lobby of the Ritz Hotel.

It took him (his patent leather shoes were new) some time to get the shoes onto his feet, and by the time he rushed into the lobby of the Ritz, neither of the two drunks, nor any of the Arabs, nor the American male, nor that splendidly constructed blonde was in sight.

What was in sight was the French Foreign Minister and his official entourage. They had apparently just come in the lobby and seen nothing out of the ordinary.

“I hope, Mr. Secretary, that we have not kept you waiting?” the Foreign Minister said.

“Not at all, Mr. Foreign Secretary,” the Secretary of State said, and allowed himself to be escorted to the official limousine.

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Chapter Seventeen

At just about the moment the *Englebert Humperdinck* pulled into its berth on the Seine, preparatory discharging its charter passengers, the elevator of the Hotel Continental opened on the third floor, discharging Congressperson Hortense V. Clumpp and Airwoman Third Class Mary-Margaret Maguire.

They walked down the corridor of the hotel, looking not at all like the uniformed WAAF and severely tailored Congressperson who had the day before emerged from the door of Air Force One.

Somewhat to Mary-Margaret's surprise, Congressperson Clumpp's gabardine skirt and jacket had concealed a rather buxom but altogether (from the male chauvinist sexist pig point of view, of course) attractive form. Furthermore, four hours at the hands of Monsieur Pierre (Hairdresser to the Jet Set, American Express Cards Accepted, as his card in the window advertised) had worked, if not miracles, then at least wonders. Gone were the horn-rimmed glasses and the Dean Acheson eyebrows. Gone, too, was the Golda Meir coiffure and gone were the Nature's Way Natural Form molded ox-hide shoes. Even the wholesome, practical smell of Ivory Soap was gone, or at least wholly obscured by a full ounce of "Jezebel."

Congressperson Clumpp was now a redhead, her locks done up in the latest style. Her feet were shod in calfskin with three-inch heels. The color of the shoes (sort of an off-purple) matched the tint around her eyes and the polish on her freshly manicured fingernails. And she was dressed from the skin out in a new wardrobe which, including the shoes, weighted something less a pound.

The Congressperson was as surprised to find a Marine guard standing outside one of the doors in the corridor as the Marine guard was to see her.

"Bonjour, mademoiselle," the guard said. *"Voulez vous couchez avec moi?"*

He did not find himself, as Mary-Margaret Maguire fully expected, sailing down the corridor backward holding his stomach. Incredibly, he was not butted.

“Oh, you Marines are so impetuous,” Congressperson Clumpp said, and reached up and pinched him on the cheek. “So naughty!”

“Geez, I’m sorry, honey,” the Marine said. “I thought you …”

“I know what you thought, you naughty boy,” the Congressperson said. “Now what are you doing standing here in the corridor?”

“I’m sorry, ma’am,” the Marine said, finally remembering his duty. “That is national security information.”

Momentarily, Congressperson Clumpp experienced a relapse.

“Listen, dummy,” she said, in her familiar, remembered Floor-of-the-Congress voice. “I’ll have you know you’re talking to Congressperson Clumpp.”

“You’re putting me on,” the Marine said, admiringly. “Can you teach me to talk like that? I’d like to scare my first sergeant.”

His future, his very life hung in the balance for a moment as a terrible battle was waged within Hortense V. Clumpp’s psyche. Her every reflex ordered her to lower her head and let the crumb have it. But there was something else, something more primitive, working within her, too, and it won.

“Just a little joke, sweetie,” she said, in a rather sultry voice. “The tone of voice, I mean. I mean, I really am, believe it or not, a Congresswoman.”

“You mean, *Congressperson,”* Mary-Margaret corrected her.

“Watch it, Maguire,” Congresswoman Clumpp said, “I know what I mean. And I still haven’t forgiven you for that crack about me not having enough clothes on to blow my nose in.”

“I like your clothes,” the Marine said. “You really a Congresswoman?”

“I know I don’t look it,” Hortense said, taking out her purse and showing him her identification. “But things are changing all over.”

“Well, I’ll be damned,” the Marine said. “You run for President, sweetie, and you can count on the entire U.S. Marine Corps.”

“You darling boy!” Hortense said. “But that brings us back to the original question. What are you doing here?”

“We’re guarding an American lady,” the Marine said. “Arab terrorists grabbed her husband.”

“I wish to see her,” Hortense said. The Marine swung the door open for her.

“What about you, Honey?” the Marine whispered in Mary-Margaret’s ear. “I get off in a couple of hours.”

“You’re a male sexist!” Mary-Margaret said with all the biting disdain at her command.

“How’d you know?” the Marine said. “What about it?”

She stormed into the room with a wiggle of her rear end intended to show utter contempt. The gesture failed. The Marine beamed his approval.

It took Congresswoman Clumpp about three minutes to find out the root of Prudence’s problem, and another three minutes to find out that the Government of France, the United States Embassy, the Gendarmerie Nationale, and the Bayou Perdu Council, K of C, were doing all that was humanly possible to snatch Ace Travers back from the hands of the Arab terrorists.

“Now what have you been doing for this poor girl?” she demanded.

François Mulligan wordlessly handed Hortense V. Clumpp one of the raffia-wrapped bottles of Calvados. She sniffed it, made a thoughtful face, sniffed again, and then raised it to her lips. She took several swallows and then handed it back to François.

“Not bad,” she said. “Not bad at all.” She handed the bottle to Mary-Margaret. “Have a little belt,” she said. But then she turned back to Prudence. “Get out of that chair,” she ordered. “Take a shower. Fix your hair.”

“What for?”

“You’re going to the Opera with us,” Hortense V. Clumpp said. ‘You’re not doing anybody any good sitting there, sucking at that jug, and feeling sorry for yourself.”

“But what if something has happened to my Ace?” Prudence demanded plaintively.

“What if something *hasn’t?”* Hortense replied. “Supposing, for example, he’s right down the street at the Ritz with a blonde? And then he walks in here and sees how much you’re worried sick? He’d have you in his pocket for the rest of his life.”

“She’s right,” Mary-Margaret Maguire said, hiccoughed, and repeated: “She’s right.”

“I don’t know,” Prudence said. Hortense handed her the bottle.

“Take a little sip of that, dear,” she said. “It’s what the men call liquid courage.”

Prudence had a little nip, and then handed the bottle to Mary-Margaret, who said that maybe another little sip would help her hiccoughs. Mary-Margaret handed the bottle to Hortense who said that, under the circumstances, she thought another sip would be in order. And finally, the bottle was returned to Prudence, who took a swallow, paused thoughtfully, and took a second, even larger swallow.

“I’m going,” she announced. “My Ace is a man among men. He can handle all the Arabs in the world with one hand tied behind his back. What am I worried about?” she stood up. “And I would certainly hate to have him come back here and find that I’d been mooning around worrying about him … like a … lovesick female.”

“Precisely,” Mary-Margaret Maguire said, and hiccoughed.

“You’re not a little tiddly, are you, dear?” Prudence said.

“Absholutely not,” Mary-Margaret said. “Never felt better in my life.” It was a statement with elements of truth. She did feel fine. She felt fine because the four ounces of Calvados she had just swallowed were the first ounces of hard liquor to ever pass her lips. After the first swallow, which had burned going down, she experienced an entirely pleasant glow starting in the pit of her stomach. And the second and subsequent swallows, her taste buds and throat having been anesthetized by the first swallow, were painless.

Prudence MacDonald-Travers marched erectly, if somewhat unsteadily toward the bathroom. Congresswoman Clumpp sat down in a chair and reached for the Calvados on the coffee table. Mary-Margaret Maguire sat

down on the couch beside her. Her eye fell on the Marine at the door. She put her right hand beside her face and waved “Hi, there” at him. On second thought, he looked like a very nice guy for a male sexist pig. She smiled at him, and then decided he might misunderstand her meaning, so she added a wink to the smile.

Backstage at the Paris Opera, Boris Alexandrovich Korsky-Rimsakov finally managed a moment alone with H.R.H. Prince Hassan. He was partially in costume; that is, he had on the riding breeches and boots of the uniform he would wear as the British officer, Gerald. He was naked to the waist. Kristina, who hated to call a hairdresser to their dressing room, had gone off to find her.

“You have failed me!” Boris announced. “You have failed me in my hour of need!”

“How was I going to bring an exercise girl in here with your sister sharing your dressing room?” Prince Hassan asked reasonably.

“You should have thought of something,” Boris said.

“There is an old saying of my people,” Prince Hassan said, composing it on the spot, “that anticipation of a deed is often as exciting as the deed itself.”

Boris considered this.

“There may be something to that,” he said. “I recall a redhead in Vienna. A Hungarian mezzo-soprano. Thinking about it with her was much better than the act itself. She reeked of paprika. It was like making love to a bowl of goulash.” He looked at Hassan. “But what has that got to do with me, you camel thief? How am I supposed to sing without having had my exercise?”

“Think about it,” Hassan said. “Anticipate it!”

“Anticipate what? Kristina will be here after the performance. I’ll be in the same lousy spot I’m in now.”

“I can arrange it so that Kristina will not come here after the performance,” Hassan said. “We will have Mam’selle Hot Lips take her to the hotel to change.”

“And you will have someone come here? Is that it?”

“Not Mam’selle Hot Lips, of course. It will be necessary for her to accompany Kristina to the hotel.”

“I leave the matter entirely in your hands,” Boris said grandly. “If you fail me this time, Hassan, I will tear you limb from limb.”

“I will not fail you, Maestro,” Hassan said. “And while the performance is on, I will have a bottle of brandy and a bottle of champagne sent back here.”

There came a knock at the dressing room door.

“Three minutes, Maestro!” the page said.

“Boris Alexandrovich Korsky-Rimsakov is ready!” Boris boomed. He turned to Hassan. “I hope you understand just how ready I am, my dear friend!”

“Yes, of course, Boris Alexandrovich.”

“You may open the door for me,” Boris said, putting on his tunic. “My adoring audience awaits me.”

The Secretary of State, accompanied by the French Foreign Minister and his wife, arrived at the Paris Opera by limousine and marched up the stairs to the Presidential (formerly Royal and Imperial) Box between erect ranks of the Garde Républicaine. The Secretary noticed, but kept to himself, the battered appearance of the normally glistening and immaculate armor and helmets, and the battered *gardiens* themselves. There, were black eyes and bruised cheeks and lips, and there didn’t seem to be as many of them as there usually were.

Once they had taken their seats, and the orchestra began to play the overture, the Secretary looked around at the boxes to either side of his own. In the box immediately adjacent to his, a rather striking woman, no youngster, but certainly a looker with a magnificent set … rather imposing physique … smiled at him and waved.

He diplomatically waved back and flashed her his famous toothy smile before he realized with a shock that the good-looking female greeting him so warmly was none other than Congresswoman Hortense V. Clumpp. With

her were other females, somewhat younger, very good-looking, and apparently in very good spirits, laughing, joking, and poking their U.S. Marine escorts in the ribs.

To his right, in the last seat of the last box reserved by the French for Those-to-Be-Decorated, his eye fell upon Undersecretary of State F. Radcliffe Copperthwaite, who looked like death warmed over in his white tie and tails. With him were the moustachioed singer he had seen being carried into the Rtiz, who looked in much better shape. As the Secretary watched, the moustachioed character reached in the pocket of his jacket and took out a flask. He offered it to the statuesque blonde …

The Secretary remembered then, suddenly, that the blonde had called him "Beauregard." The man with the moustache was obviously Colonel Beauregard Beaucoupmots, who had been reported missing with Copperthwaite. And that meant that the statuesque blonde was the Reverend Mother Emeritus Wilson. This neat little theory was instantly shattered. The woman who should have been the Reverend Mother put the Colonel's flask to her lips and took a deep swallow. Reverend Mothers, as a rule, seldom do that. It must be someone he … *met* ... in Paris. The FBI said the Colonel did have a reputation as a lady's man.

The houselights dimmed and the curtain went up.

The Secretary frankly didn't care much for opera, especially opera dealing with the British and Indians in India. He was having a good deal of trouble with the latter about the former, and vice versa, and all the first ten minutes of the opera managed to do was remind him of all of the trouble.

The first time he paid any interest at all was halfway through the first act when Gerald appeared. His very appearance on the stage caused waves of applause and a chorus of soprano "Bravos!" which the singer acknowledged with a graceful bow, right and left, and then by standing in the center of the stage, arm raised above his head in the manner of certain politicians. When he began to sing, the Secretary, who had been told only that he was going to the Opera, and not the story behind the *Performance pour la Charite,* checked his program to see just who the singer was.

The Secretary kept his smile firmly fixed on his face, but he was not at all pleased to read the name Boris Alexandrovich Korsky-Rimsakov. That

didn’t sound French at all. It sounded Russian. The customary means in which the French expressed displeasure with their American friends was to suddenly become enamored of the Russians.

The Secretary had just discreetly stolen a look at the face of the Foreign Minister to see if he could read something in his face, when he became aware of something else out of the ordinary, something just as puzzling. He had heard of roses being thrown at ballerinas, and even hats being thrown at bull fighters, but never in his wide experience had he encountered what was now taking place. From all over the opera house, keys were being thrown onto the stage.

“We have taken Boris Alexandrovich to our hearts,” the French Foreign Minister said suddenly.

“So I see,” the Secretary said, as coldly as he could.

On the stage, after a final, swooping, arms-spread-wide gesture of acknowledgment, Boris Alexandrovich Korsky-Rimsakov straightened up, opened his mouth, and began to sing. There was a gurgling sigh immediately beside the Secretary. He turned to see that the Foreign Minister’s wife was no longer sitting erectly in her chair, but had, it appeared, swooned. She was slumped back into her chair, arms and legs spread, her mouth open, her opera glasses dangling from her hands. Her eyes were glassy, and she appeared to be in ecstasy.

The Foreign Minister did not seem to notice.

The Secretary looked around him. The same sort of mysterious fit seemed to have struck at least two dozen other women, including Congresswoman Hortense V. Clumpp.

Boris Alexandrovich Korsky-Rimsakov finished his aria and turned to face his audience. There was a moment’s hushed silence, and then the opera house was filled with a horrifying wail which, after a moment, the Secretary came to recognize as the sound of a chorus of feminine approval.

The air was again full of keys flying toward the stage, and then, from a box immediately to the right of the stage, something fluttered downward. The Secretary stared to make sure his eyes hadn’t deceived him. They hadn’t. It was a brassiere, and then in a moment, there were other

brassieres, then small filmy objects which the Secretary recognized as female underpants, and finally, the piece de resistance, a garment the Secretary recognized from the Sears, Roebuck catalog as a complete foundation garment for the stout figure.

"Incroyable!" the French Foreign Minister said.

"Formidable," the Secretary replied, pronouncing the word in the French manner.

Hortense V. Clumpp regained control of herself at the sound of the foundation garment (which was, in fact, a formidable garment) striking the stage. She turned to Mary-Margaret Maguire.

"Stop kissing that Marine," she said, "and pay attention."

"Sorry," Mary-Margaret said. "I don't know what came over me."

"What did you find out about that … man's … physical condition?"

"I found out that Hawkeye … that's Dr. Pierce … arranged with the American Hospital for an ambulance to be ready at the stage entrance immediately after the performance," Mary-Margaret said.

Congresswoman Clumpp got to her feet. She looked around the opera house and spotted Dr. Pierce, barely recognizable in white tie and tails, in a nearby box. She started to leave the box, but at that moment, Boris started to sing again. Congresswoman Clumpp settled back into her seat. She clasped her hands together and held them against her breast. A look of utter peace came on her face.

During Act Three, Dr. Benjamin Pierce, Dr. John Francis Xavier McIntyre, and H.R.H. Prince Hassan left their box and made their way backstage. Dr. McIntyre carried in his hands a bottle of Courvoisier brandy and two brandy snifters. Dr. Pierce carried a wine cooler, in which rested a bottle of Chateau d'Hautville '13 and two champagne glasses. His Highness carried in his left hand a thick wad of bills, which he dispersed generously to those guards and other employees charged with keeping the public out of the backstage area.

The trio entered Boris's dressing room. They opened the bottle of brandy, and both Dr. Pierce and Dr. McIntyre tested it for quality. Then they

opened the champagne and tested that for quality. Then they carefully wiped the glasses. Dr. Pierce then took from the pocket of his white formal vest a small bottle bearing the label of the American Pharmacy. He very carefully dropped six drops of a clear liquid into the brandy bottle, and then another six drops into the champagne bottle.

“Doctor,” Dr. McIntyre said. “If I might be so bold as to make a suggestion?”

“Certainly, Doctor,” Dr. Pierce said. “I welcome, in a case of this nature, your sage advice.”

“We are dealing, Doctor, with Boris Alexandrovich Korsky-Rimsakov,” Dr. McIntyre said solemnly.

“I believe, Doctor, I get your meaning,” Dr. Pierce said. He uncorked the brandy and champagne bottles again and carefully dripped another six drops of the clear liquid into each.

“Before you close them, Doctor, might I suggest that a test is indicated?” Dr. McIntyre said.

“I quite agree, Doctor,” Dr. Pierce said. They turned to His Highness.

“I don’t drink,” His Highness said in some alarm.

“This is not drinking,” Dr. Pierce said. “This is a scientific experiment. Certainly your religion has nothing against that?”

“Why don’t you test it?”

“We are needed,” Dr. McIntyre said. He handed the brandy bottle to His Highness. Dr. Pierce held the champagne bottle in readiness.

“One little sip of each, Hassan, will be sufficient,” Dr. McIntyre said.

His Highness tipped the brandy bottle up, swallowed, reached the champagne bottle, tipped it up, swallowed, handed it back to Dr. Pierce, and nodded his head. He ran his tongue over his lips. Then he rolled his eyeballs upward in his skull and crumpled silently to the floor.

Dr. McIntyre produced a stethoscope from the tail of his tails and held it to His Highness’s chest,

“That stuff is marvelous!” he said.

“There is only one problem,” Hawkeye said.

“Which is?”

“What do we do with him?”

“Put him in a cab and send him home,” Trapper John replied.

“His bodyguard might misunderstand,” Hawkeye said.

“Well, then, send him to our room,” Trapper said.

“Better yet, you take him to our room, and meet me at the hospital,” Hawkeye said.

“Agreed,” Trapper John said.

“Why are you agreeing so readily?” Hawkeye asked suspiciously.

“Because I would rather run the risk of dealing with Hassan’s bodyguards then I would with Boris if that stuff doesn’t work on him,” Trapper said. He bent over His Highness, picked him up, and slung him over his shoulder.

“Good luck, old buddy,” he said, putting his hand out to Hawkeye. “If things don’t turn out well, can I have your golf clubs?”

There was a knock at the door. They looked at each other in alarm, but finally Hawkeye gathered his courage and opened the door. A beautiful woman, a tall redhead, stood there in a low-cut evening dress.

“Zis is zee dressing room of Boris Alexandrovich Korsky-Rimsakov?” she asked. Then she saw Hassan on Trapper’s shoulders. “*Out*, zat is zee man who engage me.”

“Oh, yes,” Hawkeye said. “Won’t you come in, please?”

“What is zee matter with him?” the lady asked, patting His Highness on the cheek.

“Nothing serious,” Hawkeye said. “Get going, Trapper.”

“Oh,” the lady said. “Chateau d’Hautville ‘13. How nice! One seldom sees that any more.”

“I’m not sure I should leave you alone under these circumstances,” Trapper said.

“Oh, don’t be ridiculous,” Hawkeye said. He turned around. “Lady,” he said excitedly. “Don’t do that!”

“I am not to have zee petit glass champagne?” the lady said. “Jacqueline always has zee petit glass champagne before she goes to work.”

She raised the glass to her lips, drained it, held the glass up to Trapper John and Hawkeye in salute, and then, with an almost beatific smile on her face, collapsed to the floor.

“God, you can’t be trusted to do anything right,” Trapper John said. “Just don’t stand there. Pick her up and carry her outside.”

“Where are you going to take her?”

“With the Prince,” Trapper said. “When he wakes up, he’ll think he’s in heaven.”

Hawkeye picked up Mademoiselle Jacqueline, threw her over his shoulder, and followed Trapper, carrying His Highness out of Boris’s dressing room.

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Chapter Eighteen

Most of the backstage security personnel deserted their posts in simple curiosity as Hawkeye and Trapper John carried Mademoiselle Jacqueline and His Highness out the stage door and loaded them into a taxicab.

Congresswoman Hortense V. Clumpp therefore had no difficulty in making her way backstage and into Boris's dressing room. The only person who saw her do so, in fact, was Benjamin Franklin Pierce, M.D., as he started back to Boris's dressing room after unloading Mademoiselle Jacqueline in Trapper's care.

His first reaction was to run her off. And then he considered that she would serve as sort of a heaven-sent substitute for Mademoiselle Jacqueline. She was female (oddly more attractive than he remembered her) and that would be sufficient to get Boris to have a shot at the booze. The only problem would be if she started in on the sauce before Boris got there. And on reflection, that wouldn't be a problem, either. Boris would naturally have a drink to steady his nerves after finding an unconscious female in his dressing room.

Hawkeye took up a position where he could watch the stage and the dressing room door and not be seen. The final curtain came down in a shower of hotel keys and dainty unmentionables. Boris and Kristina took seven curtain calls and finally came off the stage. Right on cue, Hot Lips showed up, took Kristina's arm, and led her away.

Boris checked to make sure she was gone, and then strode purposefully to his dressing room, closing it carefully behind him.

"My dear Maestro," Congresswoman Clumpp said. "I hope you won't think I'm forward, coming to your dressing room like this."

"Where else could you have gone?" Boris asked, examining her quickly with his eyes and finding her not only entirely satisfactory, but even splendid. This might be, he thought, because of the extended period of abstinence, and then again it might not. In any case, Hassan had lived up to his promise.

"I could have asked you to my box," Congresswoman Clumpp said.

“To your box?” Boris asked incredulously. “Wouldn’t that have been a little conspicuous, not to mention uncomfortable?”

“I thought so,” Congresswoman Clumpp said. “That’s why I came here.”

“You’re American, aren’t you?” Boris said. “My God, we really are taking over this country, aren’t we? It’s like sending coal to Newcastle.”

“I beg your pardon?” Hortense asked.

“Never mind,” Boris said. “Take off your clothes. I think I love you.”

“What did you say?” Hortense asked, shock in her voice.

“I said ‘Take off your clothes,’ ” Boris said, as he sat ‘down and pulled off his uniform boots.

“You said something else,” Hortense said.

“Madame,” Boris said, somewhat annoyed. “I said, quote, Take off your clothes, I think I love you, unquote. Is that clear enough for you?”

“Perfectly clear, my darling,” Hortense said. “I loved you the first time I saw you, but fool that I was, I didn’t recognize the emotion.”

“And when did you first see me?” Boris said.

“It’s not important, my darling,” Hortense said. “The only important thing is that we have found one another.”

Boris got one boot off and threw it across the room, and then started on the other. He looked up at Hortense. “What are you waiting for?” he asked.

“You’ll have to forgive me, my darling,” Hortense said, “This has all happened so suddenly. I’ve never done anything like this before.”

“You’re kidding!” he said. “At your age?” He got the other boot off and threw it across the room after the first. Then he walked to Hortense and made as if to put his arms around her. She ducked away with some grace and grabbed for the champagne bottle.

“Bear with me, my darling,” she said. “Be patient.”

“Being bare with you is precisely what I had in mind,” Boris said. But he waited with reasonable patience as Hortense poured champagne. He took

the glass from her and put it toward his mouth. She stilled his arm, so that she could entwine her arm with his. Then they both drank, looking deeply into one another's eyes. Boris took the glass from her hand and threw both glasses over his shoulder. He put his arms around her and touched his lips to hers. They crumpled to the floor together.

Hawkeye found them that way a minute later, wrapped in unconscious embrace. Since he could not very well leave her here, two trips to the ambulance were necessary. And then, with its bell clanging, the ambulance pulled away from the stage door of the Paris Opera and headed for the American Hospital of Paris.

"I won't be needing you anymore tonight," Colonel Beauregard Beaucoupmots said to Ace Travers. "Miss Margaret and I are having a small supper at Maxim's with Madame Korsky-Rimsakov and Mr. J. Robespierre O'Reilly, and you would just be in the way."

"Yes, sir," Ace said. "I wanted some time to myself anyway. I haven't had time to write Prudence."

"Why should you want to write Prudence?"

"She is, after all, my wife," Ace said.

"Well, why don't you just walk over and say 'hello'?" the Colonel asked reasonably, gesturing across the upper corridor of the Opera House toward Ms. Prudence MacDonald-Travers, who was leaving her box accompanied by Airwoman Third Class Mary-Margaret Maguire and four Marines in full-dress uniform.

There were two Marines per lady, one on each side, holding one female erect between them. The Calvados had finally taken effect. The ladies were sound asleep, and had been, since Act Two.

"Prudence!" Ace shouted, attracting the attention of two more Marines, who, having lost a flip of the coin, had been standing guard in the corridor. As Ace rushed toward Prudence, they rushed toward Ace. In moments, Ace was flat on the floor. Prudence and Mary-Margaret were carried down the wide staircase and loaded into an embassy car. As they went down the stairs, the Orly Field riot squad, Gendarmerie Nationale, ran up to them, in response to the whistle being blown by the Marines.

There was finally a break in the case. One of the Arab terrorists had been caught! He wasn't going to fool the U.S. Marines by loudly protesting that he was a foreign correspondent of the New Orleans *Picaroon-Statesman;* they had seen him rushing at that nice Ms. Prudence MacDonald-Travers with their own eyes.

Colonel Beauregard Beaucoupmots was vaguely aware of the sound of a disturbance elsewhere in the Opera, but put it from his mind. He went down a side staircase and found Miss Margaret just where she said she would be, waiting for him in a taxicab with Madame Korsky-Rimsakov and J. Robespierre O'Reilly.

As the taxi rolled past the Cafe de la Paix, Colonel Beaucoupmots had a suggestion.

"I have it on the highest authority," he said, "a foreign service officer with many years of service in these parts, splendid chap by the name of Copperthwaite, that the only place you can get a decent martini in Paris is at the bar at my hotel. Would you all like to stop in for a teensy-weensy martineroney before we go eat?"

"Beauregard, you think of everything!" Miss Margaret said.

"Perhaps a little glass of wine in the Ritz would be nice," Kristina said. "I can relax now. Big Brother is in the capable hands of Drs. Pierce and McIntyre."

"Finest kind," J. Robespierre O'Reilly said.

"Stop at the Ritz," Colonel Beaucoupmots ordered.

There was something of a traffic jam at the entrance to the Place Vendome. As a purely precautionary measure, an additional detail of police had been assigned to make absolutely sure that nothing could go wrong with what, on its face, seemed a simple enough proposition. At eight five the Foreign Minister would arrive in his official limousine at the Ritz to pick up the American Secretary of State. The official car, of course, would wait right in front of the main entrance while the Foreign Minister fetched the Secretary.

Next, they would drive the three blocks to the Opera. The limousine would wait immediately outside the Opera until the performance was

concluded. Then at approximately eleven fifteen it would go directly back to the Ritz. Very possibly, the Secretary would ask the Foreign Minister to have a little nightcap with him, and if so, the limousine would, of course, wait directly in front of the door while the Foreign Minister was inside.

Nothing really extraordinary would be required. The rules normally in effect for the Place Vendome, such as restricting it to *Premiere Classe Autos Seulement* and barring busses from it would be enforced.

Everything had originally gone smoothly, and as planned. The Foreign Minister had picked up the Secretary of State and they had driven to the Opera without incident. At eleven fifteen, word was flashed by walkie-talkie from the Opera that the Foreign Minister and the Secretary of State had entered the official limousine and were at that moment on their three-block way back to the Ritz.

Just as soon as the official car had passed the Cafe de la Paix, the gendarmes on duty in the Place de 1'Opera, who had been holding up traffic, permitted it to pass freely again. A large bus, marked MINISTRY OF CULTURE, and looking as if it had just completed a long, dusty journey, turned onto Rue de Rivoli.

This was forbidden to ordinary busses, but an official bus was another thing, and the gendarme in the Place de 1'Opera permitted it to pass freely. Not so the gendarme in the Place Vendome. He saw the bus coming, jumped into the middle of the street, turned red, and blew his whistle, simultaneously raising his hand, palm outward, in a gesture to halt, a gesture which bore an uncanny resemblance to the gesture used to express mutual recognition in Italy under the late and unlamented II Duce.

The gesture was effective. The driver slammed on his brakes. Thirty-six members of the Bayou Perdu Council, K of C, who had dozed off on the long ride back from Normandy, slid off the somewhat slippery seats onto the floor. Cries of rage, outrage, annoyance and all-around pique were heard in both English and Norman-sounding (but actually Bayou Louisianan) French.

Senior Assistant Knight of the Holy Grail Jean-Baptiste Finnegan (there had been over the years few outside marriages, marriages to non-Cajuns, among the inhabitants of Bayou Perdu, and what few there had

been had to those of Irish extraction. It was theorized by ethnologists that this was because only the Irish possessed the characteristics of admiration for the grape and the bottle so admired in the Bayou country) was in command, his superiors, Knights Louis de St. Andre and François Mulligan having previously returned to Paris.

"What the hell is going on?" Knight Finnegan inquired of the driver.

"Notre passage est interdit," the driver said, gesturing out the windshield to the gendarme standing there with his hand raised resolutely.

"Open the door," Jean-Baptiste Finnegan commanded. "I will handle this."

The door whooshed open. Finnegan straightened his hat and hitched up his pants and descended from the bus.

"M'sieu l'Admiral," the gendarme said, after he saw the uniform heavy with gold lace, "I regret that orders from above have barred the Place Vendome to busses, even busses carrying such distinguished personages as yourself."

Finnegan could see, across the Place Vendome, the Hotel Continental. It was an easy walk, and the walk would serve to wake the boys up. They were going to need their wits about them if the somewhat garbled story— that some dirty Arabs had grabbed Mam'selle Hot Lips— the Frenchman had told was true.

"Not to worry," Jean-Baptiste said to the gendarme. He stuck his head back in the bus. "Awl-RIGHT!" he ordered. Like François Mulligan, he had done his time in the United States Marine Corps. "Off your butts and on your feet. Let's hit it!"

Moving with something less than the speed and dispatch we have come to expect from the Marines, the Bayou Perdu Council, K of C, nevertheless began to debark from the bus.

This was not what the gendarme had in mind when he explained that the Place Vendome was closed. He had expected the bus driver to go elsewhere, not discharge what was obviously a naval delegation, probably from the port of Cherbourg.

“M’sieu l’Admiral,” he said. “I regret this is impossible.”

“What’s impossible, friend?”

“You must go back on the bus and go elsewhere.”

“Oh,” Jean-Baptiste said. “I understand. Not to worry. We are here to help get mam’selle Hot Lips back from the Arabs.”

“I have no idea what you are talking back,” the gendarme said. “But you must get back on the bus.”

“What’s his problem?” someone asked in English.

“I don’t know,” Jean-Baptiste said. “But I don’t like his attitude.”

“Either do I,” someone said.

“Tell him we’re guests of the French Government,” someone suggested, and Jean-Baptiste did so.

“Get back in the bus!” the gendarme screamed. He was not used to having his authority challenged. As far as he was concerned, having his authority challenged was the same thing as insulting La Belle France, and that, obviously, was intolerable.

“Go to hell,” Jean-Baptiste Finnegan said conversationally.

“I do not understand,” the gendarme said. Jean-Baptiste Finnegan obligingly made the translation.

The gendarme raised his billy club in what Jean-Baptiste Finnegan regarded as an unfriendly gesture. He took the billy club away from him and threw it over his shoulder. It landed on one end and bounced. It bounced right into a plate-glass window bearing the legend VAN CLEFF & ARPELS PARIS LONDON NEW YORK DALLAS AND BEVERLY HILLS. The window shattered, and instantly a large bell began clanging.

“Now what?” someone asked.

Break ranks and make for the hotel!” Jean-Baptiste Finnegan ordered. “Every man for himself.”

Already, off in the distance, they could hear the funny whooping noises the French police cars made. Moving with skill and grace born of

long experience with such situations through a skirmish line of advancing gendarmes, the Bayou Perdu Council, K of C, dashed through the Place Vendome for the safety of the Hotel Continental.

At the sound of the burglar alarm bell, the Foreign Minister made an instant decision. He practically pushed the Secretary of State out of the limousine, closed the door, and told the driver to drive off. The Secretary of State understood the gesture. Sometimes, as he was well aware, the ultimate finesse in diplomatic relations is to see no evil, hear no evil, and speak no evil. He went inside the hotel and marched under the discreet, cut-glass sign reading BAR.

The ensuing confusion delayed the arrival of Colonel Beauregard Beaucoupmots (their taxi had been halted immediately behind the Ministry of Culture's bus) a good ten minutes. Against just such a contingency, Colonel Beaucoupmots made a practice of carrying on his person an emergency flask, which he shared with Miss Margaret— Kirstina and Radar announcing they would just as soon wait until they could have some wine.

When their taxi finally pulled up in front of the Ritz, and Colonel Beaucoupmots was conducting negotiations with the driver to hold himself in instant availability for further transportation, Kristina whispered in Radar's ear.

"Would you be a dear, Robespierre, and go back to the Opera and see that Big Brother really got safely off to the hospital?"

Her wish was Radar's command, and he set off at a trot back to the Opera.

He had no trouble making his way to Boris's dressing room, and the English-speaking stage doorman, his palm having been crossed, reported that Boris Alexandrovich Korsky-Rimsakov was indeed in the hands of the medical profession. Radar who was onto only some of the details of the operation, looked around the dressing room and saw a nearly full, already chilled bottle of champagne, and a nearly full bottle of Couvoisier brandy.

"Waste not, want not," he said aloud, and grabbed both, and then started back to the Ritz Hotel.

Madame Kristina, Reverend Mother Miss Margaret, and the Colonel, meanwhile, had made their way to the bar and been shown to a table against the wall which opens on the garden. Sitting at the adjacent table, hovering over a martini, was a somehow familiar-appearing man in evening dress. Colonel Beaucoupmots's feeling that he had seen him somewhere before was reinforced by the gentleman's facial expression. He seemed to be looking at them as if he had seen them somewhere before himself.

"I beg pardon," Colonel Beaucoupmots said. "But haven't we met before? Are you an American?"

"I *vas* linking dat I haf seen you before," the Secretary said.

"Not an American, eh?" Beaucoupmots said. "No matter. Some of my closest friends are not Americans. Beaucoupmots is the name, sir. Colonel Beauregard Beaucoupmots."

"I am duh Secretary uff State," the Secretary said somewhat coolly.

"An honor to meet you, sir," Colonel Beaucoupmots said. "May I present the Reverend Mother Emeritus Wilson and Madame Korsky-Rimsakov?"

"How do you do?" the three of them chorused.

"And exactly which country is it, Mr. Secretary, that you're Secretary of State of?" Colonel Beaucoupmots asked, with deep Louisiana charm.

"Oh, there's Robespierre!" Madame Kristina said, as Radar, a bottle in each hand, came into the bar.

"There's who?" the Secretary asked incredulously.

"J. Robespierre O'Reilly," Kristina explained. "He's an American industrialist."

"I am familiar with duh name," the Secretary said.

"And what brings you to Paris, sir?" Colonel Beaucoupmots asked. The Secretary opened his mouth to reply. He had a good deal to say, and there was a moment's hesitation as he established the priorities. The pause was long enough for Colonel Beaucoupmots to add, "But first, let's have a little sip to cut the dust of the trail!"

He took the bottle of Chateau d'Hautville '13 from Radar and poured from it.

"I propose a toast to Madame Kristina," the Colonel said, "whose performance tonight thrilled us all."

The Secretary had no choice but to respond to that. He raised his glass, clicked it against those of Miss Margaret and the Colonel, and drank deeply. Miss Margaret and the Colonel did likewise.

"Would you bring us two Shirley Temples?" Radar said to the waiter who had come to the table not to take an order, but to make the announcement that the Ritz Bar, regrettably, had a rule against patrons bringing their own potables.

"M'sieu," the waiter began, and then stopped. His eyes widened. Radar looked at him in confusion and then turned to look where the waiter was staring. Colonel Beaucoupmots, Miss Margaret, and the funny-talking foreign diplomat were all asleep.

"Oh, dear!" Kristina said. "Robespierre, what are we going to do?"

"I never saw Hot Lips pass out before," Radar said, with awe in his voice. "Boy, they must have really been socking it away."

"Sir," the waiter said. "This is the Ritz Bar. People simply do not pass out in the Ritz Bar!" He snapped his fingers, and almost instantly a half dozen waiters and busboys and bartenders appeared. With a skill that could only be born of long practice, they quickly had the trio erect and suspended between them and headed toward the door. Radar and Kristina started to follow.

"Sir!" the waiter said. "You have forgotten your … property."

"Oh, thank you," Radar said, and grabbed the bottles, and then followed the little parade out of the bar and into the lobby.

The night manager appeared and surveyed the situation. He pointed an aristocratic, disdainful finger at the Secretary. "By direction of the Government of France, this is ours," he said. "Take it to the Charles de Gaulle suite." He next looked at Colonel Beaucoupmots and Miss Margaret.

“These are not ours. Have you, sir or madame, any idea who they are and where they belong?”

“They’re staying at the Hotel Continental,” Radar said.

“Bring a hotel car around,” the night manager ordered an assistant manager. “Not a Rolls-Royce. A Cadillac will be more than adequate. And telephone to the Continental that we are sending them.” He bowed to Radar and Kristina, and then marched away.

The Colonel and Miss Margaret were loaded with dispatch into a Cadillac sedan, and then Kristina and Radar got in. The car moved off in the direction of the Hotel Continental.

Radar looked out the window.

“Look at that, Kris,” he said. “The Bayou Perdu Council, K of C, and a whole bunch of Marines, running up to the Ritz. I wonder what’s going on.”

Kris reached over, and surprised at her forwardness, grabbed Radar’s hand.

“I don’t think it’s any of our business, Robespierre,” she said. “And we really have enough to worry about, worrying about Big Brother, don’t we?”

“Yes,” Radar said, savoring the touch of her hand in his, and the word “we.”

“We certainly do.”

“Oh, Robespierre, I’m so relieved I have you to lean on,” Kristina said.

“After we get the Colonel and Hot Lips to bed,” he said, “maybe we could go out for a bowl of stew? I have an all-night operation on the Avenue Victor Hugo.”

“Oh, I’d like that, Robespierre,” Madame Kristina said. “And afterward, we can telephone the hospital and see how Big Brother is doing.”

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Chapter Nineteen

At six forty-five the next morning, a taxi rolled up before the American Hospital in Paris and discharged J. Robespierre O'Reilly and Madame Kristina Korsky-Rimsakov. They entered the building holding hands and walked up to the reception desk.

"I would like to see Dr. Benjamin Franklin Pierce," Radar said.

"I'm afraid that Dr. Pierce is unavailable at the moment," the receptionist said.

"How about Dr. J. F. X. McIntyre?" Radar pursued.

"Dr. McIntyre isn't available either."

"Oh, my!" Kristina said, deeply concerned. "Can you tell us about Boris Alexandrovich Korsky-Rimsakov?"

The receptionist consulted her records.

"I'm afraid that any information regarding that patient will have to come from one of his attending physicians," the receptionist said.

"Who are his attending physicians?" Kristina asked.

The receptionist consulted her records, and then announced. "Mr. Korsky-Rimsakov is being treated by Dr. B. F. Pierce and by Dr. J. F. X. McIntyre. And they are not available at the moment."

Radar let loose, with obvious reluctance, of Kristina's hand. He took two steps backward, put his hands to his mouth, and bellowed: "Hawkeye! Trapper John! Up and at 'em!"

"Sir, you can't do that!" the receptionist said.

"Hawkeye!" Radar bellowed again. "Trapper John!"

There was sort of a hushed silence following the second call, and then Radar sucked in his breath to call yet again when a swinging door to the interior of the hospital opened, and Hawkeye, followed by Trapper John, staggered into the reception room.

They looked terrible. They were in surgical greens, sweat-soaked and liberally sprinkled with what could only be dried blood. They were

unshaven, uncombed, and from the dark bags under their eyes and the redness of the eyes themselves, it was obvious that they hadn't had much, if any, sleep.

"My God!" Radar said. "What happened?"

"What's wrong with my big brother?"

"There's hardly anything wrong with him, Kristina," Hawkeye said, yawning and rubbing his eyes.

"With one minor exception," Trapper said "following a comprehensive medical examination, it is our professional opinion that he is one disgustingly healthy human being."

"Then why do you look that way?" Radar asked.

"We had just finished the examination," Hawkeye said. "And were having a cup of coffee when the first of them came in."

"The first of who?" Radar asked.

"The Bayou Perdu Council, K of C, somehow got the idea—probably from Jean-Baptiste Finnegan—that Hot Lips was being held captive by Arab terrorists in the Ritz Hotel. They stormed the place, assisted, I gather, by at least fifty U.S. Marines, and it took half the police force of Paris to get them out. They're rather fond of Hot Lips, and they went down fighting."

"Why," Kristina said, "Hot Lip … *Miss Margaret* wasn't being held captive in the Ritz. I know for a fact that she was sound asleep in her own bed in the Hotel Continental."

"Well, nobody told the Bayou Perdu Council, K of C," Hawkeye said. "And when they started coming in here— it was just like old times at the 4077th MASH, Radar, you should have been here—Dr. Kramer said they were our problem, and Trapper and I had to take care of them. We just finished."

"Just the two of you?" Radar asked.

"No," Hawkeye said. "General Blake happened to be in the Ritz. He was waiting for the Secretary of State in his suite. Would you believe the Secretary had to be carried to his room from the bar? Anyway, Henry came

along and helped out. The Mayor of Paris declared a disaster and appealed for medical volunteers."

"Hawkeye," Kristina said. "You said, 'There's hardly anything wrong with him.' What is wrong with him?"

"Would you believe Singer's Nodes?" Hawkeye said.

"Sounds logical," Radar said.

"What are Singer's Nodes, Hawkeye?" Kristina asked.

"Normally they have very little to do with singers," Trapper answered. "Except in this case, where what we really have is a case of singer's Singer's Nodes."

"I don't think I follow you," Kristina said.

"They're little growths in the throat, first described by a doctor named Singer," Hawkeye explained.

"Are they dangerous?"

"Boris is in no danger at all right now," Hawkeye said. "Sometime, when his schedule permits, and you can cajole him into a hospital, he should have them removed."

"The last time Boris was in a hospital was in Korea," Kristina said. "That was twenty years ago. Can he wait another twenty years?"

"No," Trapper said simply.

"Then we'll have to do it while he's here," Kristina said. "How did he react when he woke up this morning?"

"I've been afraid to ask," Hawkeye said. "I'm glad you're here."

"Can I see him?" Kristina asked.

Hawkeye waved her through the swinging door to the interior of the hospital. They walked down a corridor and finally turned into a room. Boris Alexandrovich Korsky-Rimsakov was in a bed, wearing a hospital gown. The back of the bed was cranked up, and he was eating. Two nurses in their middle years were watching him eat, wearing smiles of contentment on their faces. They looked a bit uneasy when they saw Hawkeye and Trapper.

“Put your minds at rest,” Boris said, forking a large piece of bloody steak into his mouth. “I shall die happy, bearing no one ill-will.”

“Do they normally serve filet mignon for breakfast in this place?” Trapper asked.

“These two delightful angels of mercy realized that someone in my condition should not be forced to eat the slop they pass around here,” Boris said. “And they had a small snack sent in for me.”

The two nurses giggled like schoolgirls.

“What makes you think you’re going to die?” Hawkeye asked.

“Why else would I be in a hospital?” Boris asked reasonably. He turned to his sister.

“Kristina,” he said. “I want you to be brave. I’m sure that funny-looking little man will be of enormous comfort to you after I’m gone, and will be of some assistance to you in selecting suitable monuments to my memory. A statue in some nice park in Paris would be nice, I think, and busts in the opera houses of New York and Vienna.”

“He means it,” Radar announced in shock. “He actually thinks he’s going to croak and he doesn’t mind.”

“Robespierre!” Kristina said. “You have been reading his mind!”

“How do you know?” Radar asked, flushing.

“Can you read minds?” Kristina demanded.

“Not yours,” Radar said. “But most people’s.”

“Boris,” Hawkeye said, “you’re not going to die.”

“I’m not? Are you sure?”

“Not now, anyway,” Trapper said. “Barring a shotgun blast from one outraged husband or another, you have a long life ahead of you.”

“My God!” Boris said. He pushed the table out of the way and started to swing his legs out of bed. “In that case, I must find her!”

“Find who?” Hawkeye asked.

“I don’t even know her name,” Boris said.

“Get back in bed,” Kristina ordered, her voice suddenly flat.

“Kris,” Brois said. “Do you remember when we were little, and I was having trouble with girls?”

“You had trouble with girls?” Trapper asked. “I don’t believe it.”

“What are you talking about?” Kristina asked.

“You told me, one time, that sooner or later, I would find the female meant for me. That when that happened, it would be like being struck by lightning.”

“I remember something about that,” Kristina said. “So what?”

“It was the only thing you ever told me that I didn’t believe,” Boris said. “Oh, I believed you at first, Kristina, and I waited anxiously for it to happen. But the months passed, and then the years, and she never appeared. And God knows I looked. *God*, what a long *search* it’s been!”

“I hope you can’t read his mind right now,” Radar said to Kristina. She looked at <u>him</u> and then flushed and averted her eyes.

“Get to the point, Boris,” she snapped. “Stop wallowing in your memories!”

“Kristina,” Boris said. “Last night, it happened!”

“What happened?”

“I met her. The woman you said I would one day meet, the one I’ve been searching for all these years. She appeared, like an angel from heaven, in my dressing room. She didn’t look that much different from all the others. But when I kissed her … my God! I remember just the faintest touch of her lips … then the lightning bolt of true love … and the next thing I knew, I was here in this hospital, ready to leave happily for that, Great Opera House in the Sky. What else could life offer to me?”

“Nurse,” Dr. Pierce said. “Would you please go to Room 103 and bring Miss Smith in here?”

“Right away, Doctor,” the nurse said.

“If I’m not going to die,” Boris said, looking right at Hawkeye, “then what am I doing here? You don’t have any more funny ideas about a hose, do you?”

“Boris,” Kristina said. “You have been given a complete physical examination.”

“And?” he asked menacingly.

“You have Singer’s Nodes.”

“Of course I have singer’s nodes,” he said. “What other kind could I possibly have?”

“They have to come out,” Kristina said.

“What do you mean they have to come out?” he asked. “You’re not suggesting that I should have some sort of an operation?”

“What kind of an operation?” Hortense V. Clumpp asked. She was standing in the doorway, wearing a hospital gown. “Boris, darling, you are ill!” She rushed to the bed, threw herself in his arms, and began to weep. He looked confused for a moment, and then wrapped his arms around her.

“We must be brave, my darling,” he said. “And face the facts.”

“What are the facts?” she asked.

“I have nodes,” Boris said dramatically. “Singer’s nodes, of course. And surgery is required.”

“Oh, my God!” Hortense said. She pulled herself free of Boris. “I must have a telephone!” she said. “I have to call the President.”

“What has the President to do with my nodes?”

“We will have you flown to Washington,” Hortense said. “The entire medical facilities of the United States Government will be put at your disposal.”

Boris pondered that a moment, then sadly shook his head.

“There is no time for that,” he said. “Isn’t that so, Doctor?”

“The sooner the better, of course,” Hawkeye said, after a moment’s indecision.

“My sister,” Boris announced, “and my old comrade-in-arms, Horsey Chevaux, have convinced me that this man, despite what you might think looking at him, is a highly qualified surgeon.”

“He’s talking about you,” Hawkeye and Trapper John said to each other simultaneously.

“I’m talking about the one with the hose fetish,” Boris said.

“That’s what happens when you try to help people,” Hawkeye said.

Hortense V. Clumpp turned to Hawkeye.

“Will you operate, Doctor?” she asked.

“There is the matter of the fee,” Hawkeye said.

“Hawkeye!” Radar said. “I’m surprised at you.”

“I am not talking about money,” Hawkeye said.

“What are you talking about?”

“F. Radcliffe Copperthwaite,” Hawkeye said.

“What about him?” Hortense V. Clumpp said. “That miserable little twerp!”

“Henry Blake called from the Ritz,” Hawkeye said. “He said the first thing the Secretary did when he woke up was call the embassy, tell them to find Copperthwaite, and when they found him, to fire him.”

“That’s the first smart thing the Secretary has ever done,” Hortense said.

“What for?” Kristina asked.

“He is holding Copperthwaite responsible for everything that’s happened here,” Hawkeye said. “And it seems, to top everything off, Copperthwaite thumbed his nose at him.”

“Perhaps I misjudged the man after all,” Hortense said.

“The Secretary is in no position to say anything about Mr. Copperthwaite,” Kristina said. “I happen to know he passed out from overindulgence in the Ritz Bar.”

“You were there?” Hawkeye asked.

“It was very embarrassing,” Kristina said. “He was actually glassy-eyed. They had to drag him right through the lobby.”

“I’ll handle the Secretary,” Hortense V. Clumpp said firmly.

“In that case, I’ll operate,” Hawkeye said. “With Dr. McIntyre assisting.”

“What exactly does the operation entail?” Hortense Clumpp asked.

“Actually, it’s a very simple procedure,” Hawkeye said.

“Come sit by me, my darling,” Boris said. “And we will face our first major problem together.”

Hortense went to Boris’s bed and held him against her bosom.

“Let’s have it, Doctor,” she said. “Together, Boris and I can face anything.”

“Well,” Hawkeye said. “The first thing we do is administer a general endotracheal anesthesia.”

“A general endotracheal anesthesia,” Boris repeated, “naturally.”

“And then we protect the teeth with a cushion … adhesive tape… and insert a Jako laryngoscope.”

“A Jako laryngoscope,” Boris said. “Fine idea!”

“I’m glad you approve,” Hawkeye said. “We then inspect the larynx.”

“Naturally,” Boris said.

“Then we find the Singer’s Nodes, which are attached to the vocal cords, using an operating microscope. I saw that the hospital here has a fine Zeiss operating microscope. A magnification of about sixteen power is required.”

“You are going to insert a sixteen-power microscope in my throat?” Boris asked.

“That’s right,” Hawkeye said. “And once it’s in place, we take what we call a right-angled, side-biting cupped microlaryngeal biopsy forceps and

go snip-snip. That's all there is to it. There is seldom any bleeding at all. It's a routine, relatively minor surgical procedure."

He looked at the bed and stopped talking.

"He fainted when you told him about the microscope," Trapper said. "And Hortense joined him when you got to the part about the forceps."

"Nurse," Hawkeye ordered. "Roll the big one into the operating room. And then put Miss Smith—Congresswoman Clumpp—back to bed. Don't wake her for fifteen minutes. By then, we'll be through."

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Chapter Twenty

VIA RCA RADIO, VIA SATELLITE

PRESS RATES VIA NEW YORK

FOR CABLE DESK NEW ORLEANS Picaroon-Statesman

NEW ORLEANS LOUISIANA

SERVICE MESSAGE

FOLLOWING DISPATCH FROM TRAVERS TO BE RUN PAGE ONE WITH FIVE-COLUMN BANNER HEADLINE. MUST RUN PHOTOS FOLLOW VIA PRESS-WIRE. COLONEL BEAUREGARD BEAUCOUPMOTS, PUBLISHER END SERVICE MESSAGE

TRAVERS FIRST TAKE AMERICANS DECORATED BY FRENCH

BY ACE TRAVERS, PICAROON STATESMAN FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT

PARIS, FRANCE——FIFTEEN AMERICANS WERE DECORATED HERE THIS AFTERNOON IN THE SHADOW OF THE ARC DE TRIOMPHE BY A GRATEFUL FRENCH GOVERNMENT. BANDS PLAYED, TRUMPETS SOUNDED, AND MASSED FRENCH AND AMERICAN FLAGS LENT COLOR TO A CEREMONY WHICH IN THE WORD OF COLONEL BEAUREGARD BEAUCOUPMOTS HERALDED “A NEW ERA IN THE LONG HISTORY OF CORDIAL FRANCO-AMERICAN RELATIONS.”

COLONEL BEAUCOUPMOTS WAS HIMSELF DECORATED WITH THE ORDER OF GENERAL CHARLES DE GAULLE FOR HIS MANY CONTRIBUTIONS TO FRANCO-AMERICAN UNDERSTANDING. THE AWARD CAME AS SOMETHING OF A SURPRISE TO THE PUBLISHER OF THE Picaroon-Statesman, WHO WAS IN FRANCE IN A JOUNALISTIC CAPACITY.

REVEREND MOTHER EMERITUS MARGARET H. W. WILSON, WELL-KNOWN NEW ORLEANS CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS LEADER, WAS DECORATED WITH THE ORDER OF JOAN OF ARC FIRST CLASS, AND LOUISIANA INDUSTRIALIST JEAN-PIERRE DE

LA CHEVAUX WAS INVESTED AS A KNIGHT COMMANDER OF THE LEGION OF HONOR.

MR. DE LA CHEVAUX ALSO ACCEPTED, ON BEHALF OF THE BAYOU PERDU COUNCIL, KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS, HONORARY MEMBERSHIP IN THE GARDE REPUBLICAINE FOR THAT BODY, AND ON BEHALF OF THE KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS, BESTOWED HONORARY MEMBERSHIP IN THE K OF C UPON THE GARDE REPUBLICAINE AND THE ORLY FIELD RIOT SQUAD, GENDARMERIE NATIONALE.

THE NORMALLY FIRM VOICE OF THE FRENCH FOREIGN MINISTER BROKE WITH EMOTION AS HE EXPLAINED THE ABSENCE AT THE COLORFUL CEREMONIES OF BOTH THE GARDE REPUBLICAINE, THE RIOT SQUAD, AND THE BAYOU PERDU COUNCIL, K OF C. HE EXPLAINED THAT A RIOT, BLAMED ON STUDENTS LED BY OUTSIDERS, HAD OCCURRED IN THE PLACE VENDOME THE PREVIOUS EVENING. AWARE THAT THE UNITED STATES SECRETARY OF STATE WAS IN THE HOTEL RITZ ON THE PLACE VENDOME, THE KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS, ASSISTED BY MARINE VOLUNTEERS OF THE U.S. EMBASSY GUARD DETACHMENT, RUSHED TO THE AID OF THE GARDE REPUBLICAINE.

“IT WAS YET ANOTHER MANIFESTATION,” THE FOREIGN MINISTER SAID, TEARS RUNNING DOWN HIS CHEEKS, “OF THE SPIRIT OF MILITARY COOPERATION WHICH HAS EXISTED BETWEEN THE FRENCH AND THE AMERICANS SINCE THE MARQUIS DE LAFAYETTE WENT TO AMERICA TO OFFER HIS SERVICES TO GEROGE WASHINGTON.”

CASUALTIES IN THE RIOT REPORTEDLY RANK HIGH. AN AIRCRAFT BELONGING TO THE CHEVAUX PETROLEUM COMPANY WHICH HAPPENED TO BE IN THE AREA HAS BEEN CONVERTED BY THE FRENCH AIR FORCE INTO A FLYING AMBULANCE. THE PRESIDENT OF FRANCE WAS REPORTED TO HAVE ORDERED THAT NO EXPENSE BE SPARED, SO THAT THE BAYOU PERDU MEMBERS COULD BE RETURNED TO THE UNITED STATES AS FAST AS HUMANLY POSSIBLE.

END TAKE ONE

TRAVERS SECOND TAKE DIPLOMAT PROMOTED

BY ACE TRAVERS, PICAROON-STATESMAN FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT

PARIS, FRANCE—THE PICAROON-STATESMAN HAS LEARNED EXCLUSIVELY THAT F. RADCLIFFE COPPERTHWAITE, PRESENTLY UNDERSECRETARY OF STATE FOR POLITICO-MILITARY AFFAIRS, WILL SHORTLY BE NOMINATED FOR AN UNSPECIFIED HIGHER RANKING POSITION WITHIN THE STATE DEPARTMENT. THE SECRETARY OF STATE REFUSED TO CONFIRM OR DENY THAT CAREER DIPLOMAT COPPERTHWAITE WILL BE NAMED AMBASSADOR TO MOSCOW, SAYING ONLY "UNDERSECRETARY COPPERTHWAITE WILL GET WHAT'S COMING TO HIM, ONE WAY OR ANOTHER."

IN A RARE APPROVAL OF THE STATE DEPARTMENT'S PERSONNE; POLICIES, CONGRESSWPMAN HORTENSE V. CLUMPP SAID THAT, AS FAR AS SHE'S CONCERNED, COPPERTHWAITE IS THE ONLY MEMBER OF THE FOREIGN SERVICE SHE HAS EVER MET WHO KNOWS WHAT HE IS DOING, AND THAT SHE INTENDS TO BRING HIS FINE PERFORMANCE TO THE ATTENTION OF THE PRESIDENT ON HER RETURN TO THE UNITED STATES.

END TAKE TWO

TRAVERS THIRD TAKE SOLON ANNOUNCES ENGAGMENT

BY ACE TRAVERS, PICAROON-STATESMEN FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT

PARIS, FRANCE—THE PICAROON-STATESMEN HAS LEARNED EXCLUSIVELY THAT CONGRESSWOMAN HORTENSE V. CLUMPP (RADICAL-LIBERAL, CALIFORNIA) WILL MARRY FRANCO-AMERICAN OPERA SINGER BORIS ALEXANDROVICH KORSKY-RIMSAKOV AS SOON AS KORSKY-RIMSAKOV RECOVERS FROM EMERGENCY SURGERY PERFORMED UPON HIM THIS MORNING.

“THERE COMES A TIME IN EVERY WOMAN’S LIFE,” THE WORLD-FAMOUS EXPONENT OF WOMEN’S LIBERATION ANNOUNCED, “WHEN SHE MUST START THINKING OF HER REAL FUNCTION IN LIFE. I REALIZE THAT THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT WILL HAVE SERIOUS DIFFICULTY GETTING ALONG WITHOUT MY FULL-TIME SERVICES, BUT IT HAS GONE THROUGH TRYING TIMES BEFORE WITH FLYING COLORS. I HAVE COME TO THE REALIZATION,” she said, “THAT I CANNOT CONTINUE TO RUN THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES WITHOUT THE MAN I LOVE AT MY SIDE.”

END TAKE THREE.

Immediately following the awards ceremony, those who had been decorated were escorted to Orly Field where Air Force One sat waiting for them. As the line of official cars passed the American Hospital, it was joined by an ambulance.

In the ambulance, lying with his back propped up, his hand held by a nearly distraught Hortense V. Clumpp, who, although not daring to challenge his will, felt he was unnecessarily risking his life in the gesture of going to the airport, rode Boris Alexandrovich Korsky-Rimsakov, now wearing a pale yellow dressing gown instead of a hospital gown.

The ambulance also contained a case of Chateau D’Hautville ‘11 champagne (a get-well gift from the Baron d’Hautville). Dr. Benjamin Franklin Pierce whom Korsky-Rimsakov now described as unquestionably the best healer in the world, had prescribed regular ingestion of limited amounts of cold champagne for medical purposes.

Kristina Korsky-Rimsakov walked to the ambulance when the convoy had reached the airport, tenderly kissed her brother, and then gave a sisterly hug to the woman into whose life-long care she was committing him.

Then she joined J. Robespierre O’Reilly, who was ostentatiously examining the rosette of the decoration now fixed in his lapel.

“Thank you, Robespierre,” she said, “for not going with me to the ambulance. I would hate to tell you what that woman … was thinking.”

“There should be no secrets between us, Kristina,” Radar said, flushing bright red. “I got the message loud and clear, even over here.”

“Well, I suppose it’s all right,” Kristina said blushing. “If you’re married.” She then, quite naturally, wanted to change the subject. “I see you’re still carrying around that brandy bottle from last night.”

“Waste not, want not, as I always say,” Radar said. “Hawkeye told me that a little glass of brandy is just the thing, sometimes, to perk people up after a long flight. What I thought I would do is give it to the stewardess and tell her to give everybody a little drink just before we land.”

“Robespierre,” Kristina said, as they climbed the stairs, “you’re the most thoughtful person I’ve ever met.”

The last two passengers to board Air Force One were Drs. Pierce and McIntyre. They had a final look down Boris’s throat, shook his hands, kissed a Congresswoman, and then climbed aboard the aircraft. The door closed, the engines started, and Paris Departure Control cleared Air Force One for a direct flight to the Spruce Harbor International Airport in Maine.

“My God!” Hawkeye said suddenly, as the plane broke ground. “Did you buy perfume?”

“Oh, my God!” Trapper said.

F. Radcliffe Copperthwaite threw two packages across the aisle. They bore the label of a famous Paris *Perfumerie.*

“I heard what happened with the Secretary,” he said. “That ought to even it up a little.”

“Hawkeye,” Trapper asked, “do you think it would be all right if I kissed him?”

On the ground, as the glistening aircraft vanished into the overcast, the Foreign Minister wiped his forehead with his handkerchief, and then sighed audibly. It was all over.

An aide stepped up to him to report that the American Congressperson Hortense V. Clumpp had remained behind to be with Boris Alexandrovich Korsky-Rimsakov.

Thank God for love, the Foreign Minister thought. At least she would no longer pose any problems.

He marched over to the ambulance.

“My dear Congressperson,” he said. “How delighted we are that you will remain with us a little longer in France.”

“How nice of you to say so,” Hortense said. “As a matter of fact, I was just thinking about you.”

“You were?”

“Yes, indeed,” Congresswoman Clumpp said. “While darling Boris is regaining his strength, I will have some free time. Just as soon as I can get loose, I’d like to get together with you and discuss how come you still owe us billions from the First World War.”

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